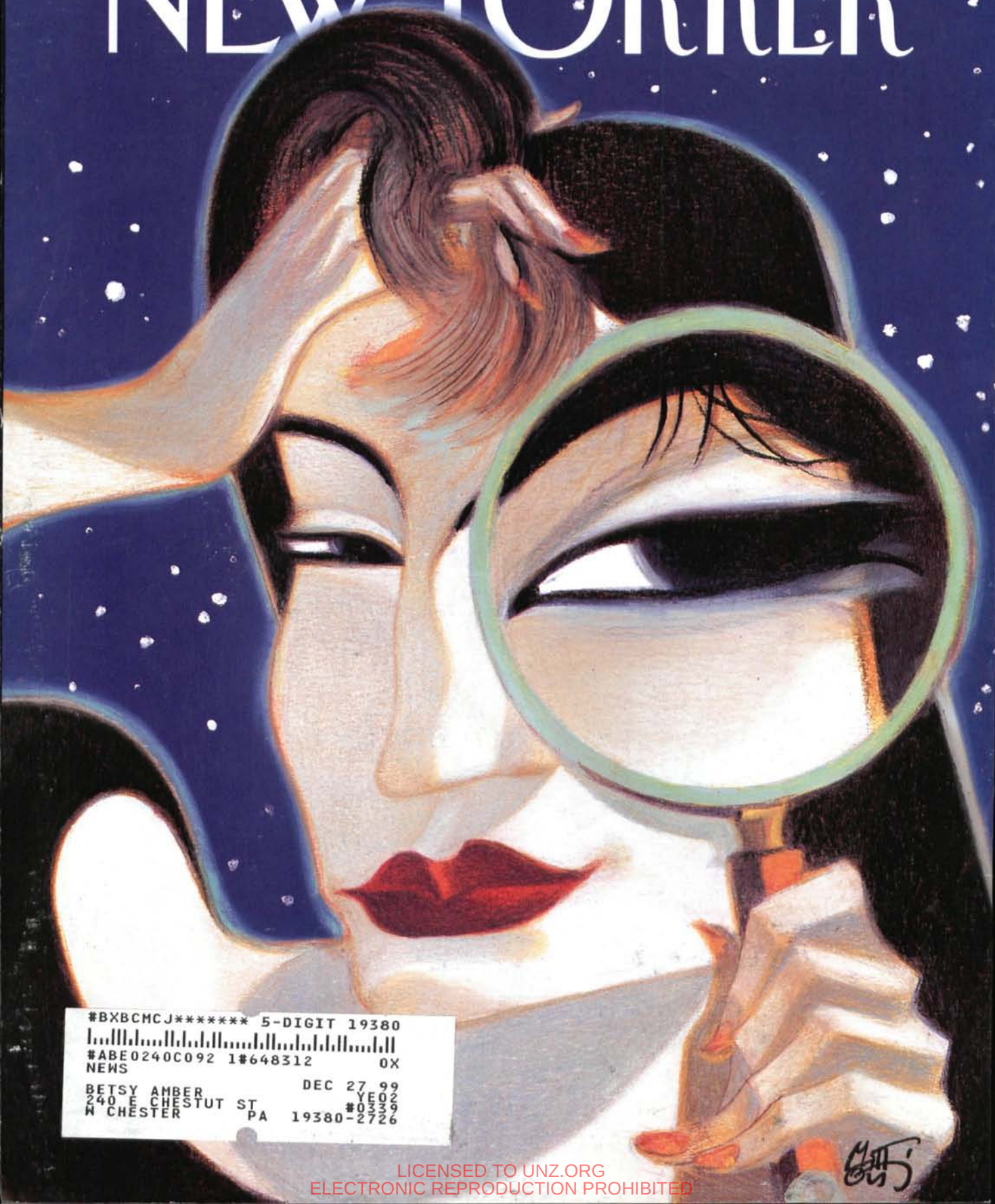


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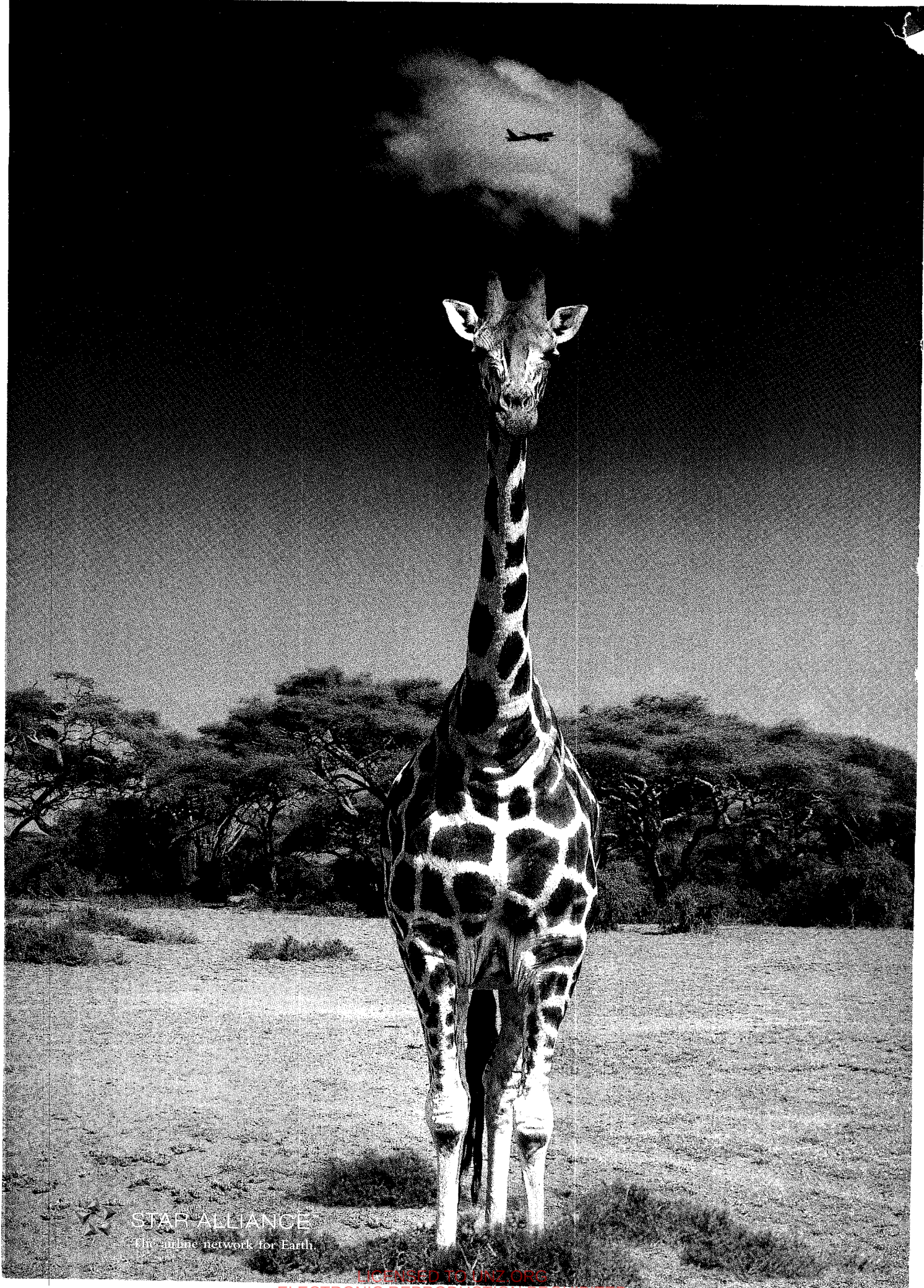
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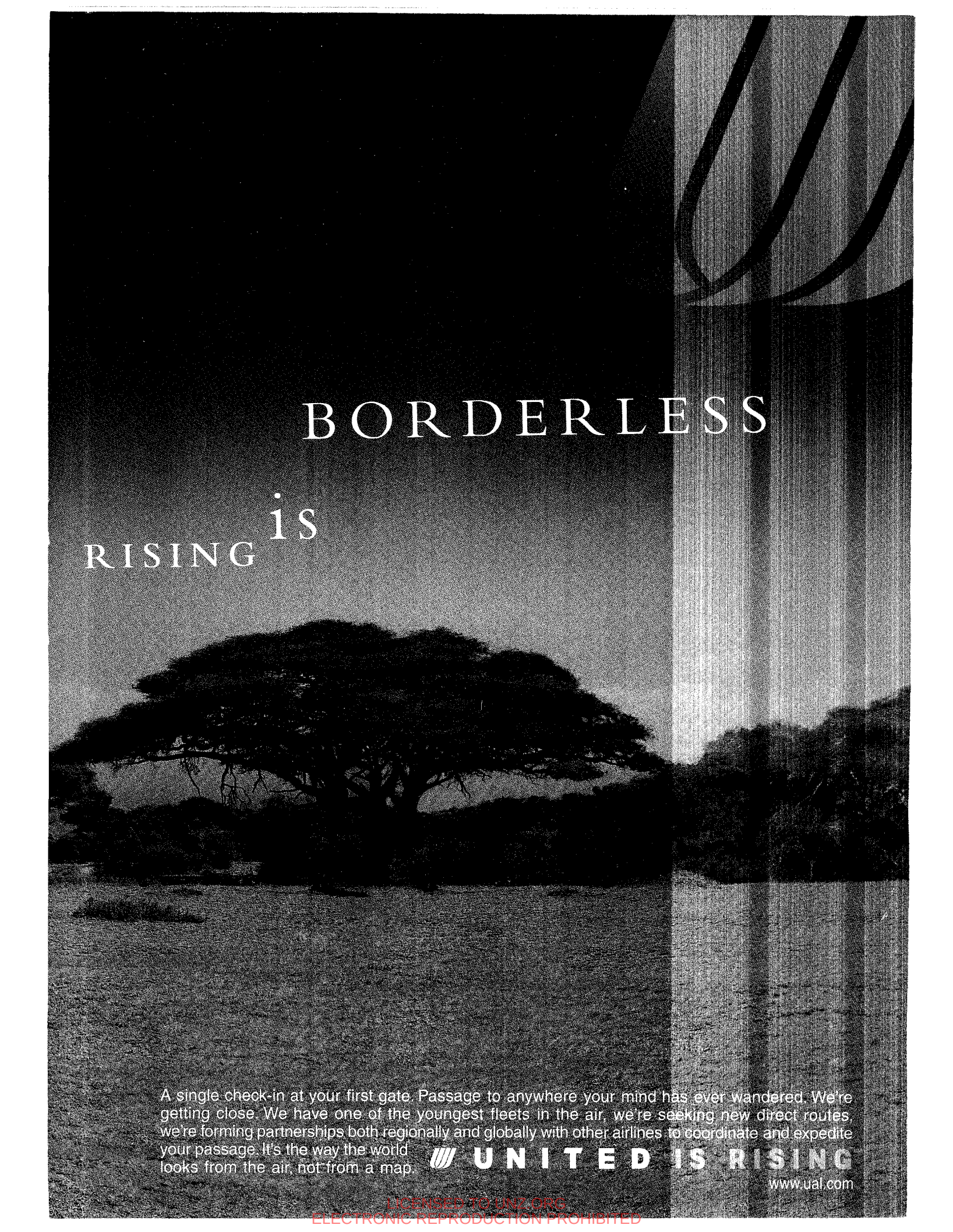
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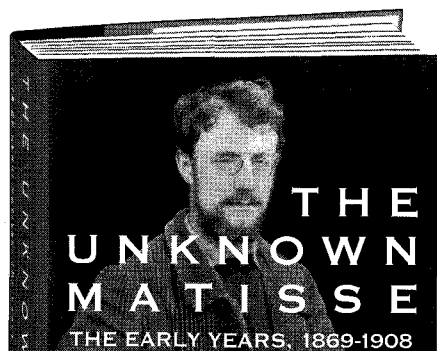
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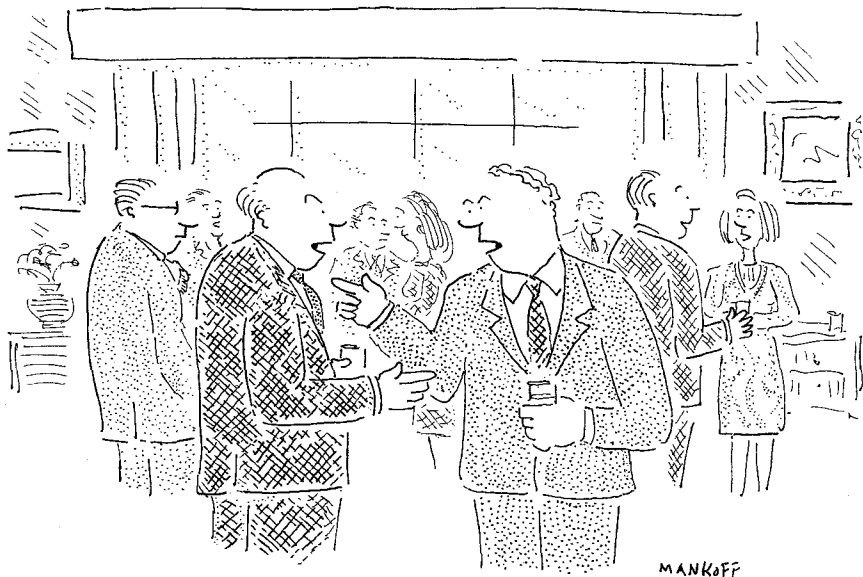
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THE MAIL



SCIENCE AND HISTORY

E. M. Halliday takes me to task for my views on the Sally Hemings-Thomas Jefferson question (The Talk of the Town, November 16th). I changed my mind about their relationship because the new DNA evidence struck me as convincing, while the evidence that existed previously was circumstantial, conflicting, and inconclusive. By way of comparison, I currently believe that Lee Harvey Oswald shot John Kennedy, and James Earl Ray shot Martin Luther King—each acting alone. But if some dying Mafia don or C.I.A. operative provides compelling evidence to the contrary, I'm prepared to listen. Listening with as much detachment as one can muster, regarding all self-interested witnesses (whatever their political or racial agendas) with equivalent skepticism, is what doing history is all about. One of the ironies of the current debate is that most of those now vindicated, including the Hemings descendants and Annette Gordon-Reed (the author of "Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: An American Controversy"), retain a highly positive and in some cases downright reverential view of Jefferson. My own portrait of him has always been more circumspect, and the new evidence only deepens and darkens that portrait. He is more a sphinx than ever before. My previous conclusion was that Jefferson was living a paradox. Now I think he was living a lie.

JOSEPH J. ELLIS
Ford Foundation Chair in History
Mount Holyoke College
South Hadley, Mass.

The paternity of Sally Hemings's children may not be as "definitively established" as E. M. Halliday would have it. Eugene Foster, a collaborator in the genetic research and a co-author of the *Nature* article that contained the Jefferson-Hemings DNA test results, told the *Times* that the results "do not

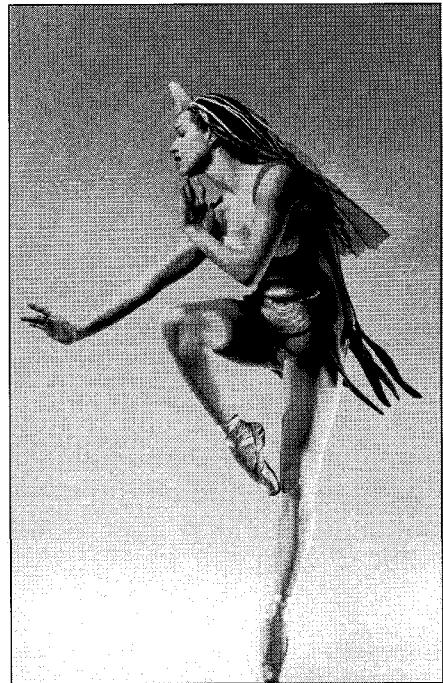
prove that Thomas Jefferson was the father of one of Sally Hemings's children." But they do show that the father was almost undoubtedly a male of the Jefferson family. Some neglected facts support the theory that Randolph Jefferson, Thomas's younger brother, might have been the father. In "Memoirs of a Monticello Slave" (dictated in the eighteen-forties), the author, Isaac Jefferson, who was born to a Jefferson family slave in about 1775, describes Randolph as being particularly familiar with the black population on the plantation; he would "come out among black people, play the fiddle and dance half the night." In this account, Isaac never describes Thomas Jefferson as socializing with his enslaved workers. Further, Thomas's papers show that Randolph was invited to Monticello in the month that Eston Hemings, the son who has been genetically linked to the Jeffersons, was conceived. And since he lived only twenty miles away, such visits were probably not unusual. In short, although the debate now has a new piece of evidence, the truth has not yet been determined.

KEVIN BUTTERFIELD
Williamsburg, Va.

The Harlequin Romance-meets-"Mandingo" narrative that has accompanied the supposed revelation that Thomas Jefferson had children with Sally Hemings reveals the perniciousness of white America's denial of the legacy of slavery. Hemings was not only, as Mr. Halliday takes care to note, "famously beautiful" and a "quadroon" (and, as such, a worthy object of white lust and racial engineering)—she was also a breeder, and has become a symbol of the role that the systematic rape of enslaved black women played in the racial and economic heritage of this country. In the final analysis, one need look no further for an explanation of Jefferson's actions than the Constitution he helped frame on the backs of black slave labor.

SIKIVU HUTCHINSON
Brooklyn, N.Y.

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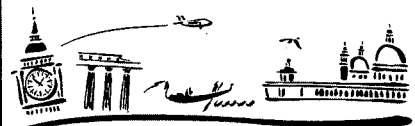
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OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

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THE CAPTAIN'S TIGER—A theatrical memoir, set on a steamer bound for Asian ports, by the South African playwright Athol Fugard, who leads the cast. In previews through Jan. 10. Opens Jan. 12 at 7:30. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

CAPTAINS COURAGEOUS: THE MUSICAL—Manhattan Theatre Club presents Treat Williams and Brandon Espinoza in a tuneful version of Kipling's novel. With music by Frederick Freyer and book and lyrics by Patrick Cook. Previews begin Jan. 12. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

A COUPLE OF BLAGUARDS—Shay Duffin and Mickey Kelly perform Frank and Malachy McCourt's two-man autobiographical show. In previews. (Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 799-4599.)

FAR EAST—An American military officer (Michael Hayden) is caught in a triangle involving his commander's wife, in a drama by A. R. Gurney, set during the Korean War. In previews through Jan. 10. Opens Jan. 11 at 6:45. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

FOSSE—A tribute to the choreographer's work, created by Richard Maltby, Jr. (director), Ann Reinke (co-director/co-choreographer), and Chet Walker (choreography re-creator). In previews. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

HOUSE/LIGHTS—Gertrude Stein's libretto for the opera "Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights" and the 1964 cult film "Olga's House of Shame" are the inspirations for the Wooster Group's latest work. Previews begin Jan. 9. (Performing Garage, 33 Wooster St. 966-3651.)

PARADISE HOTEL—A new mind bender from the director and writer Richard Foreman, about a group of travellers searching for sexual nirvana. In previews through Jan. 12. Opens Jan. 13 at 8. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 533-4650.)

PHÈDRE AND BRITANNICUS—Diana Rigg and Toby Stephens star in the Almeida Theatre Company's stagings of Racine's tragedies, presented in repertory. Jonathan Kent is the director. "Phèdre": Jan. 5-7, Jan. 9, and Jan. 12 at 7:30. Continues through Jan. 17. "Britannicus": Jan. 8 at 7:30 and Jan. 9 at 2. Continues through Jan. 16. (BAM's Majestic Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100.)

SOME VOICES—The British playwright Joe Penhall's comedy-drama about a restaurant owner who takes in his schizophrenic brother, presented by the New Group. Preview on Jan. 6. Opens Jan. 7 at 8. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 279-4200.)

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OPENED RECENTLY

ALL UNDER HEAVEN—Valerie Harper portrays Pearl Buck in a drama about the author's life, co-written by Ms. Harper and Dyke Garrison. (Century Theatre, 111 W. 15th St. 239-6200. Closes Jan. 17.)

AUGUST SNOW AND NIGHT DANCE—Repertory stagings of two plays—one set in 1937, the other in 1945—about a North Carolina family, by the novelist Reynolds Price. (Mint, 311 W. 43rd St. 315-0231. Closes Jan. 10.)

THE BLUE ROOM—Nicole Kidman is beautiful, leggy, and damn good at her job, and she and her excellent co-star, Iain Glen, have real chemistry, but it takes all of their charisma to give the cardboard char-

BOSOMS AND NEGLECT—The Signature Theatre Company's John Guare season continues with this 1979 black comedy. The playwright's strange titles often seem reasonable once you've seen the shows, and this one is no exception: a man's blind mother is having surgery for breast cancer; meanwhile, he's getting to know one of his psychiatrist's other patients. The more the characters reveal about themselves, the more mayhem follows, but, as directed by Nicholas Martin, this production flawlessly combines Guare's love of wordplay and humor with his quest to figure out how we connect to each other, and what connecting might mean. The cast—Mary Louise Wilson, David Aaron Baker, and Katie Finneran—creates such real characters that no matter how outlandish the comedy gets the audience is always aware of the high stakes. The wrenching final monologue feels inevitable, and inevitably true. (555 W. 42nd St. 244-7529. Closes Jan. 10.)

BRANDON TEENA—The Present Company presents Leigh Silverman's drama, inspired by the true story of a sensational murder that took place in Falls City, Nebraska, in 1993. (Present Company Theatre, 198 Stanton St., at Ridge St. Closes Jan. 16.)

COLLECTED STORIES—Despite a splendid performance by Uta Hagen, as an aging writer who tells her protégée the one story about her own life which she hasn't written, this revival of Donald Margulies's 1997 drama only points out how poorly constructed the relationship between the two women is. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

THE COUNTRY WIFE—The Pearl Theatre Company's production of Wycherley's Restoration comedy. (80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802.)

ELECTRA—When the superb Zoë Wanamaker first appears onstage in the title role of David Leveaux's powerful production of Sophocles' tragedy (in a new version by Frank McGuinness), she is wedged in an alcove halfway up the exterior wall of her dead father's palace, wearing the ancient mask of tragedy; she descends to earth and takes off the mask to show us the modern face of torment. It is the first of several huge, shrewdly staged moments in a production that allows the play's bewildering brutality to come through as clearly as yesterday's headlines. (12/28/98 & 1/4/99) (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

AN EVENING WITH QUENTIN CRISP—The author, actor, and wit celebrates his ninetieth year, with a return engagement of his one-man show. (INTAR, 420 W. 42nd St. 330-7200. Closes Jan. 31.)

FOOTLOOSE—A musical adaptation of the 1984 film, co-written by Dean Pitchford (who also wrote the screenplay) and Walter Bobbie. With music by Tom Snow and lyrics by Mr. Pitchford. (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

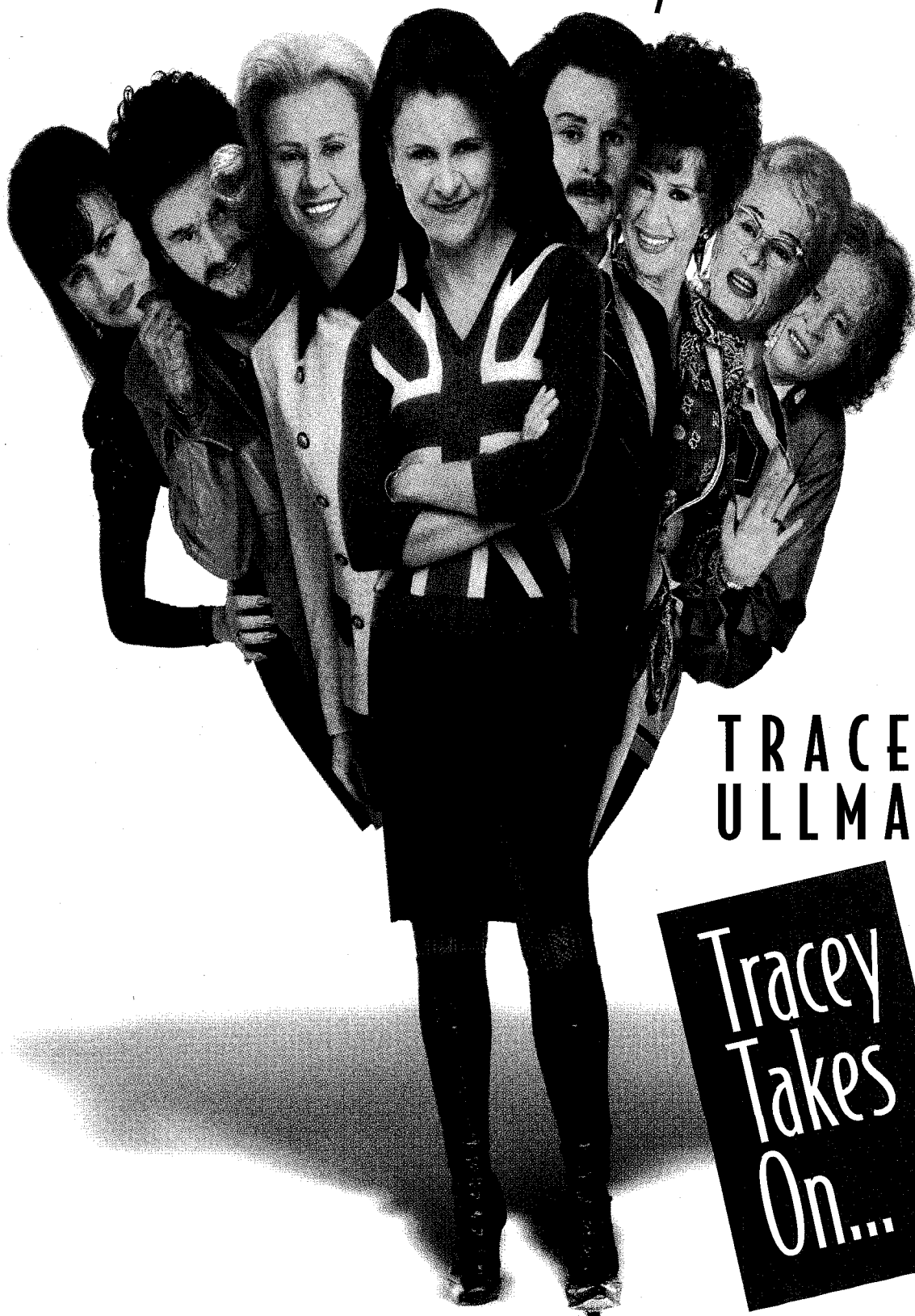
I'M STILL HERE... DAMN IT!—If you're not ambivalent about Sandra Bernhard's new show, you may have missed the point: she's



Sandra Oh and Jessica Hecht, in Diana Son's "Stop Kiss," at the Public Theatre.

acters and the charmless script an iota of life. David Hare followed Arthur Schnitzler's game plan in this adaptation of his Viennese sexual merry-go-round, "La Ronde," so the shallowness of the characters is not entirely Hare's fault; his contribution is the brittle dialogue, which makes the series of sad seductions all the more insufferable. There's nothing erotic here, and even the news of Ms. Kidman's nudity has been greatly exaggerated. Directed by Sam Mendes. (Reviewed in our issue of 12/28/98 & 1/4/99.) (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

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spent her career keeping us guessing about her motives and sincerity, and it's still interestingly hard to tell where the commentary on celebrity narcissism ends and the narcissistic celebrity begins. What stands out in this show, Bernhard's first on Broadway, is her mastery of the emotional hairpin turns in her material—a tender moment can become a hilarious monster-diva moment in seconds—and her terrific, strong singing voice. What more can you ask for? (11/16/98) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

KILLER JOE—In Tracy Letts's graphic dark comedy, an American family striving for a better life—in this case, a bunch of losers living in a trailer outside Dallas—hires a hit man to help things along. Though the experience sometimes feels like being trapped in Sam Shepard's claustrophobic Nowheresville while being smacked around by Quentin Tarantino, the terrific production is so vividly self-conscious that you hardly feel assaulted at all—in fact, you enjoy it. Scott Glenn and Amanda Plummer are billed as the stars, but the whole cast is excellent. Wilson Milam is the director. (SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 239-6200.)

LITTLE ME—Martin Short carries this musical-comedy relic on his cute little shoulders with ease. But the show—a spoof of celebrity rags-to-riches stories, which originally starred Sid Caesar, in 1962, in multiple roles—is a relic, so audience members not madly in love with Short (who are these people?) may find themselves scratching their heads, wondering how the innocent/ribald silliness ever inspired more than minor laughs. The rest of the cast is pretty much generic, with the exception of the wonderful Faith Prince, and unfortunately she's miscast. Written by Neil Simon (book), Cy Coleman (music), and Carolyn Leigh (lyrics). Direction and choreography are by Rob Marshall. (Roundabout, Broadway at 45th St. 719-1300.)

LOOT—Jean Cocteau Rep's staging of Joe Orton's comedy. (Bouwerie Lane Theatre, 330 Bowery, at Bond St. 677-0060.)

THE MOST FABULOUS STORY EVER TOLD—A fresh version of a very old tale, by Paul Rudnick. Directed by Christopher Ashley. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 460-5475. Closes Jan. 10.)

THE MYSTERY OF IRMA VEP—It's not difficult to imagine what made this farce a hit back in 1984: the play's author and original star, the immensely gifted Charles Ludlam, who died in 1987 of complications due to AIDS. As staged and performed by that production's co-star, Everett Quinton, this version ends up a bore, despite its fairly outré conceit—"Rebecca" meets Agatha Christie meets pure camp. Drag has been out of the closet for a long time now; this is an artifact of a more innocent time. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.)

THE OLD SETTLER—Leslie Uggams and Godfrey L. Simmons, Jr., portray a pair of mismatched lovers in 1943 Harlem. The play, written by John Henry Redwood, has fine characterizations and delightful jokes, but the structure is predictably melodramatic. Nevertheless, the whole cast (which includes Lynda Gravatt and Rosalyn Coleman), under the strong direction of Harold Scott, over-comes it all. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052.)

ON THE TOWN—This revival of the 1944 musical, much like the city it celebrates in its famous opening number, is a mixture of undeniably irritating qualities and tremendous satisfactions, of mystifying chaos

and disciplined vitality. The director, George C. Wolfe, jettisoned Jerome Robbins's original choreography in favor of new work that doesn't add anything; it's as if he tore down the Empire State Building and replaced it with... nothing. Still, this production is handsome and winning, and it features two performances that make you glad to be alive—one from Lea DeLaria, who plays a brassy bulldozer of a taxi-driver with Mermanesque confidence, skill, and charm, and one from Mary Testa, whose hilariously dignified portrayal of a dipsomaniac singing teacher is in the tradition of the great matronly comic character actresses of the thirties and forties. The cast in general is uneven, but the spirit of the show is very much alive in Wolfe's hands, and its pulse, fifty-four years later, still beats strong. (12/7 & 12/14/98) (Geršwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

OVER THE RIVER AND THROUGH THE WOODS—In Joe DiPietro's new comedy, a young man planning his future clashes with his four Italian-American grandparents. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

PARADE—This musical, co-conceived and directed by Hal Prince, with a book by Alfred Uhry and lyrics and music by Jason Robert Brown, revisits the case of Leo Frank, a college-educated Northern Jew who in 1913 was accused of murdering a teen-age girl in the Atlanta pencil factory that he managed, only to be taken from jail in 1915 by anti-Semitic vigilantes and lynched. It is generally believed that Frank was railroaded, and, for the entire first act this show feels like a train hauling a heavy cargo of exposition uphill to a preset destination. The second act, in which Lucille Frank fights to save her husband's life, picks up some steam, but the ride is never quite exhilarating, despite its heady moments. The hard work that went into "Parade" is transparent, but in the theatre it's originality, not earnestness, that wins the day. (12/28/98 & 1/4/99) (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

THE SHAUGHRAUN—The nineteenth-century playwright Dion Boucicault's melodrama, staged by the Irish Repertory Theatre. (132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737. Closes Jan. 24.)

SIDE MAN—Warren Leight's astute, elegiac play is a young man's bittersweet homage to his crazy, warring parents and to the mysteries of the jazz life that divided them. The father (played by Frank Wood with superb passive-aggressive vacancy), a big-band trumpet player, speaks articulately in his art but is a kind of zombie at home, which bewilders his son (a charming, laid-back Christian Slater) and drives his wife (Wendy Makkena) to drink. The son serves as a biographer of sorts, whose combined detachment from and involvement in the family is mirrored by the director Michael Mayer's expert staging, as he moves in and out of remembered scenes, alternately commenting on and participating in their chaos. Edie Falco replaces Ms. Makkena beginning Jan. 8. (11/23/98) (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

STOP KISS—Diana Son's modern tragicomedy, about two heretofore heterosexual young women (Jessica Hecht and Sandra Oh) falling in love in New York, is a small wonder. The fine production shifts back and forth seamlessly between scenes that lead up to the friends' first kiss and scenes that follow it, in the aftermath of a brutal, bias-inspired assault. It's a sweet dream and a nightmare at once, a juxtaposition that makes both sides of life seem more resonant. Ms. Hecht

stands out in the first-rate cast. Jo Bonney directed. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400. Closes Jan. 31.)

SWAN LAKE—The British choreographer Matthew Bourne's thrilling, iconoclastic version of the Tchaikovsky ballet takes the story of the troubled Prince who falls in love with a swan out of the realm of the folkloric and into the realm of Freudian nightmare, where obsession substitutes for enchantment. The simple but profound exchange of male for female swans sweeps away in one stroke the hidebound froufrou of the traditional version and releases enormous energy into the music. (10/19/98) (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100. Closes Jan. 23.)

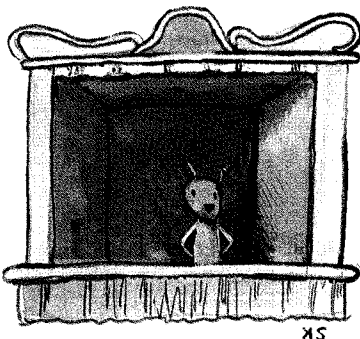
SYMPHONIE FANTASTIQUE—Abstract puppets underwater, set to the music of Berlioz. A peerless, delightful evening. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202.)

THIS IS OUR YOUTH—Kenneth Lonergan's highly praised comedy about postadolescent heartbreak, set on the Upper West Side in 1982. His characters are meant to be the by-products of a morally bankrupt culture; they have money, they have a certain raggedy charm, and they can muster a kind of vocabulary. What they don't have in life is a reason to be; what they don't have onstage is a way of compelling our attention. Lonergan, whose script shows real theatrical promise, is good on surface behavior but not on subtext. Everything that is psychologically important happens offstage. Mark Brokaw is the director. (11/23/98) (Second Stage, Broadway at 76th St. 787-3392.)

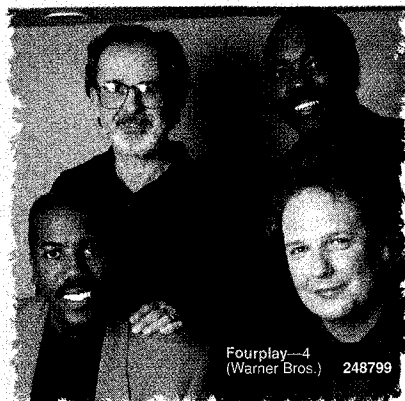
WIT—Margaret Edson's funny, diamond-sharp first play manages to yoke together Donne's "Holy Sonnets" and ovarian cancer to make an original drama about the dignity of the spirit and the failure of modern medicine. Kathleen Chalfant, as the feisty English professor with only two hours to live and so many acid jokes to tell, gives one helluva fine performance. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.)

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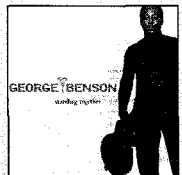
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MUSIC: Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **TITANIC:** Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4100. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200.

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET—Jan. 6 at 8: "Agon," "Concerto Barocco," and "The Four Temperaments." . . . Jan. 7 at 8: "Apollo," "Episodes," and "Symphony in C." . . . Jan. 8 at 8: "Le Tombeau de Couperin," "Duo Concertant," "Agon," and "Symphony in Three Movements." . . . Jan. 9 at 2: "Apollo," "Stravinsky Violin Concerto," and "Symphony in C." . . . Jan. 9 at 8: "Concerto Barocco," "Episodes," and "Agon." . . . Jan. 10 at 3: "The Four Temperaments," "Le Tombeau de Couperin," "Duo Concertant," and "Symphony in C." . . . Jan. 12 at 8: "Monumentum Pro Gesualdo/Movements for Piano and Orchestra," "Valse Fantasia," "Opus 19/The Dreamer," and "Cortège Hongrois." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. Through Feb. 28.)

"ALTOGETHER DIFFERENT"—A fortnight of performances by five contemporary-dance companies, with programs that, in every case, include a premiere and at least one seasoned work. Jan. 5 and Jan. 7-8 at 8: **SEÁN CURRAN COMPANY**, in "Symbolic Logic," "Each of Both," "Five Points of Articulation," and "Folk Dance for the Future." . . . Jan. 6 at 8 and Jan. 10 at 2 and 7:30: **THE KEVIN WYNN COLLECTION**, in "Vicious Beauties," "To Repel the Demons," and "Black Borealis." . . . Jan. 9 at 8: **LISA GIOBBI MOVEMENT THEATRE**, in nine aerial and acrobatic works. . . . Jan. 12 at 8: **SALLY SILVERS & DANCERS**, in "Teddy Growl," "Capture," and "HushHush." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Through Jan. 17.)

"HIT & RUN FESTIVAL"—Dance Theatre Workshop counters the Joyce with two weeks of experimental dance-music-and-performance hybrids. Jan. 6 at 8: **BABS DAVY** ("Happy Hour: How I Drank My Way Through Heterosexuality, and Other Tales") and **MATTHEW MAGUIRE** ("Luscious Music"). . . . Jan. 7 at 8: **SONOKO KAWAHARA** ("Canon in 3D Major") and **CLARINDA MAC LOW** ("Odd's Sea—the Return"). . . . Jan. 8 at 8: **PRUDENCE BROWN** ("Madwomen"), **ROBBIE MC CAULEY** ("Race and Love in the United States"), and **DAWN AKEMI SAITO** ("Ha"). . . . Jan. 9 at 8: **DAVID CALE & CARA SEYMOUR** ("Mid Air") and **JENNY ROMMAINE/GREAT SMALL WORKS** ("The Memoirs of Glück Hamelin"). (219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. Through Jan. 16.)

"VOLCANO LOVE"—The seven-member company presents circus acts re-envisioned by the choreographer Sarah East Johnson: hoop diving, hand balances, professional wrestling, swing dance, and trapeze solos and duets, all set to a score by Babe the Blue Ox. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. Jan. 7-9 at 8 and Jan. 10 at 7. Through Jan. 16.)

MARTHA@MOTHER—Richard Move, in the guise of Martha Graham, hosts the monthly dance showcase, which in this installment features Hope Clark, Molissa Fenley, Lance Gries, Sandra Kaufmann, Murray Louis, and José Navas. (875 Washington St. 642-5005. Jan. 6 at 8 and 10 and Jan. 7 at 8.)

NRITYAGRAM DANCE ENSEMBLE—The five dancers, all residents of a village devoted to the preservation of Indian dance styles, perform traditional works in which the movements reflect the sensual poses of gods as depicted in the temple sculptures of Orissa. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. Jan. 8 at 8.)

NOCHE FLAMENCA—Two nights of *tabla*-style performance from Soledad Barrio and the seven singers, musicians, and dancers of the Madrid-based company. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. Jan. 9 at 8 and Jan. 10 at 7.)

NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

"Today's Stars—Timeless Songs"—A slew of Russian singers, including Igor Nikolaev, Leonid Agutin, Christina Arbakait, and Valery Medadze, offer a program of traditional songs from their homeland. (Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 247-4777. Jan. 9 at 7:30.)



LYRICAL EDGE: *With his exquisite touch, sensitivity to texture, and poetic imagination, the pianist Fred Hersch brings to mind the late Bill Evans, the dean of modern jazz piano. Hersch has found his own voice, though—one that balances the pursuit of beauty with a penchant for experimentation. Although his repertoire leans toward familiar standards and the work of acclaimed jazz composers like Monk and Strayhorn, his introspective, sculptural approach casts each piece in a new light. In performance, Hersch and his longtime bandmates bassist Drew Gress and drummer Tom Rainey (at Iridium through Jan. 10) eagerly push things to the cliff's edge. A song can begin simply and then take wing as each player independently revises the harmony, melody, and rhythm of the tune. No one leads, no one follows, and yet poetry unfolds. Hersch's trio specializes in high lyricism and high danger.*

LAVENDER LIGHT—The lesbian-and-gay gospel choir. (Tribeca Performing Arts Center, 199 Chambers St. 346-8510. Jan. 9 at 8.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

SIXTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF BLUE NOTE RECORDS—With a classic roster that at one time or another included everyone from Albert Ammons, George Lewis, and Sidney Bechet to Sonny Rollins,

John Coltrane, and Ornette Coleman—not to mention the hard-bop and post-bop regulars of the nineteen-fifties and -sixties who comprise the required-listening list for today's young players—Blue Note Records has every reason to be proud on their sixtieth birthday. To celebrate, they've commandeered a bunch of clubs for the entire month in order to display their still-glittering cast. This week has its pleasures: the Renee Rosnes quartet at Sweet Basil (through Jan. 10), young vibes sensation Stefon Harris at the Blue Note (Jan. 7), and Cassandra Wilson at the Blue Note (starting Jan. 12). The coming weeks will flaunt more shining gems, including Don Byron, Joe Lovano, Ron Carter, Billy Higgins, and Pat Martino. We'll keep you posted.

BIRDLAND, 315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—Jan. 10: In the getting-a-bang-for-your-buck category is this triple bill featuring the trio of pianist **ERIC REED**, drummer **JIMMY COBB** with "Cobb's Mob," and, at the early show only, the whip-smart ensemble of the estimable bassist **DAVE HOLLAND**. A pleasing double bill follows on Jan. 11 with the **BRIAN BLADE FELLOWSHIP**, a cutting-edge unit led by its eclectic drummer, and the **DANILO PEREZ** trio, featuring the spirited Panamanian pianist. Jan. 12-13: The Brian Blade Fellowship. Dining.

BLUE NOTE, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Starting Jan. 12: When it came to getting press this past year, vocalist **CASSANDRA WILSON** and President Clinton ran neck and neck. Smart, seductive, and, most important, eclectic and inclusive in a Gen-X-friendly manner (name another jazz singer who covers U2, Son House, and the Monkees), Wilson's a mesmerizing performer who can draw an audience to her, making reverie a communal experience. Dining.

CARLYLE HOTEL, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound pastel murals, and, through March 13, **EARTHA KITT**. . . . Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **BARBARA CARROLL** is in attendance.

IRIDIUM, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through Jan. 10: The **FRED HERSCH** trio. Mondays belong to electric-guitar innovator **LES PAUL**.

JAZZ STANDARD, 116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—Through Jan. 10: The Brazilian-born pianist and vocalist **ELIANE ELIAS** has a light-handed ease with tropical rhythms and phrasing, as well as with mainstream jazz. She has an unsurprisingly handy way with the songs of Antonio Carlos Jobim, the Brazilian master whose work has been a favorite of jazz players for some four decades.

JOE'S PUB, 425 Lafayette St. (539-8770)—The Australian singer **DAVID CAMPBELL** (Jan. 11) has been making what public-relations types like to call a "sensation" on the cabaret circuit, providing yet another reason for aficionados of classic cabaret to feel depressed. He's unquestionably photogenic, and his light voice is far from unpleasant, but he lacks the technique that would make it musically expressive. His taste in repertoire often runs to feel-good pop or (at the outer limit) an embarrassing sort of soft rock. In this engagement, Campbell sings an entire show of songs by his accompanist, John Bucchino, who now and again does create a song worth singing. Expect a mixed bag in both program and performance.

KNITTING FACTORY, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Jan. 6: Tracing the stylistic trajectory of guitarist **MARC RIBOT**'s career as he flits from jazz to pop to ethnic music and back again offers little evolutionary logic. That he's now obsessed with putting a postmodern spin on classic Cuban music should be accepted and enjoyed rather than understood. Whether that current passion will show its face—or, if not, what will—are the big questions that draw us to this unpredictable stylist.

MICHAEL'S PUB, 109 E. 56th St. (758-2272)—**JULIE WILSON**, the doyenne of New York's chanteuses, is in the midst of an open-ended run dedicated to Cy Coleman.

SWEET BASIL, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—Through Jan. 10: Before our eyes the pianist **RENEE ROSNES** has blossomed into maturity as a confident stylist whose discernment and aversion to clichés sets her apart from other players her age. She's put together a finely attuned band including drummer Billy Drummond, bassist Peter Washington, and saxophonist Chris Potter. Dining.

VILLAGE VANGUARD, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through Jan. 10: Despite what the grandiose titles of his recordings would have you believe, pianist **BRAD MEHLDAU** isn't Bill Evans reincarnated, but he is an assured, introspective stylist who has developed a lovely give-and-take with his rhythm-mates Jorge Rossy (drums) and Larry Grenadier (bass). The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

ZINC BAR, 90 W. Houston St. (477-8337)—A young guitarist with flying fingers and a heart filled with bebop, **RON AFFIF** has a semi-regular Monday gig at an intimate space that caters to guitar freaks—just right for a six-string whiz with almost too much to say. Saturdays feature Brazilian jazz.

ROCK, ETC.

ARLENE GROCERY, 95 Stanton St., between Ludlow and Orchard Sts. (358-1633)—A narrow, dimly lit renovated bodega that's the ideal environment for three to five unknown bands a night struggling their way out of obscurity.

BLARNEY STAR, 43 Murray St. (732-2873)—Home to fine Irish music every Friday night.

BOTTOM LINE, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Jan. 8: Retro crooner **BUSTER POINDEXTER** gives his Banishes of Blue a rest and revs up his Spanish Rocketship Band. Jan. 9: Folksinger **CHRISTINE LAVIN**.

BOWERY BALLROOM, 6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—Jan. 8: A benefit for local songwriter Bruce Henderson, with former "Saturday Night Live" guitarist **G. E. SMITH**, rocking singer-songwriters **MARSHALL CRENSHAW**, **FREEDY JOHNSTON**, **WILLIE NILE**, and **AMY RIGBY**, the excellent local band **FIVE CHINESE BROTHERS**, and others. The fact that **VIC CHESTNUTT** (Jan. 9) uses a wheelchair may have earned this unclassifiable singer-songwriter media attention, but his riveting music is what keeps his albums from gathering dust. "Salesman & Bernadette," his sixth album, came out a few months ago, and the haunting, heartfelt ballads are his best work yet. Jan. 11: The **BLACK CROWES**. For a while they were a younger, feistier version of the Rolling Stones, but these days the Stones impersonate the Stones better than the Black Crowes do. Still, Chris Robinson's gnarled tenor and the band's razor-sharp rhythm section are forces to be reckoned with.

CHEZ ES SAADA, 42 E. 1st St. (777-5617)—On the ground floor of the old technical school here is a pretty café; traipse through and you reach the top of an improbably grand tiled staircase; descend and you find a basement transformed by scattered rose petals and golden light into the secret Tangier of Burroughs and Bowles. Waitresses in gold Badgley Mischka uniforms serve North African-flavored bistro fare throughout, and d.j.s play everything from nineteen-fifties Egyptian 45s to up-to-the-minute Moroccan chaïba dance music. But the greatest pleasure is the elegant "retiring room," where you can slouch on a hassock and sip a vintage cocktail.

CHICAGO B.L.U.E.S., 73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (924-9755)—Jan. 9: Blues chanteuse **SHEMOKIA COPELAND**.

CLEMENTINE, 1 Fifth Ave. (253-0003)—Cole Porter never imagined anything quite like **PHOEBE LÉGÈRE**. Part Tallulah Bankhead, part Traci Lords, she may be the only chanteuse capable of playing "I Get a Kick Out of You" with a leg tucked behind her neck. Over the past few years, Lègère's appearances have grown so rare that her previous gigs have become legendary (take, for instance, her extended run at the Ballroom, where she tastefully performed Edith Piaf material clad in a miniskirt with the Amer-

ican flag sewn in the seat). The last time we saw Lègère, she'd swapped her ivories-and-accordion-driven cabaret for a program of heavy-duty rock and roll. Though she wore the snug décolletage well, the music didn't fit. Now, like the rest of us, Lègère has rediscovered swing, which she plays on Sunday evenings with a zoot-suited three-piece ensemble called **Swingalicious**. Like all things Lègère, this is entertainment chronically unsuitable for the faint of heart. Don't expect a Gap commercial from her anytime soon. **FEZ**, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—A comfortable neo-Moroccan bar hidden inside the Time Café. The **MINGUS BIG BAND** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

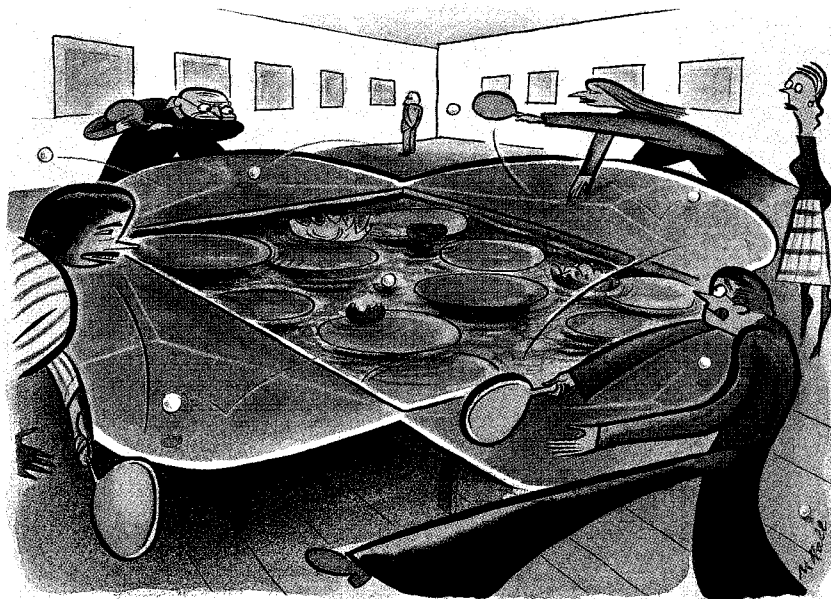
IRVING PLAZA, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—The Swing Dance Society gathers here every Sunday, with sets from eight until midnight. For information on the society, call 696-9737.

KNITTING FACTORY, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Jan. 8-9: Sonic Youth guitarist **THURSTON MOORE** noodles around with his bandmate **KIM GORDON**, **D.J. OLIVE**, **JON VOIGT**, and other friends.

MAXWELL'S, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken (201-798-0406)—Jan. 8-9: Long-suffering post-folk songwriter **FREEDY JOHNSTON**, whose sales could never approximate his considerable accolades, has a well-deserved two-night stand in Hoboken's finest watering hole.

RODEO BAR, 375 Third Ave., at 27th St. (683-6500)—The walls simulate a log cabin, a buffalo head blows smoke through its nostrils, a horse trailer has been converted into a bar. It's just about the best free house in town.

immense ash tree central to Norse cosmology) is a fuzzy shot of Kiefer wearing a dress and holding a tree branch, carelessly scribbled over. The most spectacular object on display, however, is Albrecht Dürer's "Triumphal Arch of Maximilian," an assemblage of woodcuts and etchings nearly ten feet tall. It's one of the most famous works of graphic art ever produced, and it inspired Kiefer's own monumental woodcuts, which are exhibited around it. Through March 21. . . . ¶ "Donato Creti: Melancholy and Perfection" showcases an early-eighteenth-century painter (1671-1749), the last in a line of Bolognese classicists. Through Jan. 31. . . . ¶ "Charles Burchfield from the Collection," a survey of the museum's holdings of this great, eccentric American painter (1893-1967). Through Feb. 28. . . . ¶ "Félix Vallotton: Woodcuts and Three Paintings." Through Feb. 21. . . . ¶ "Mary Cassatt: Drawings and Prints in the Met," a selection of more than fifty works on paper from the museum's collections. Through Jan. 24. . . . ¶ "From Van Eyck to Bruegel: Early Netherlandish Painting in the Metropolitan Museum." Through Jan. 17. . . . ¶ "Jade of Ancient Costa Rica" presents more than a hundred pendants, mace heads, ear ornaments, and beads, exquisitely carved with designs of birds, bats, and angry gods and polished to a high gloss. One of the most puzzling objects is an Olmec pendant with a stylized representation of a cat-headed insect being gripped by an elegant hand—an image unique in Mesoamerican art.



Free-form Ping-Pong courtesy of Gabriel Orozco, at Marian Goodman.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—"Anselm Kiefer: Works on Paper 1969-1993," a major exhibition presenting fifty-four drawings, watercolors, gouaches, and woodcuts acquired by the museum in 1995. Kiefer was the first German artist of stature to attempt to reconcile his country's mythical and intellectual tradition with the horrors of the Third Reich. In "Heroic Symbols," a whimsical watercolor from 1969, he depicts himself in a Romantic landscape, his arm raised in the "Heil, Hitler" salute—a shocking gesture, literally and artistically, at the time. A series of large black-and-white photographs, from 1980, heavily painted over in gouache and ink, make mocking reference to medieval legend: "Yggdrasil" (the

Through Feb. 28. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—"Jackson Pollock," a comprehensive retrospective—the first in the United States since 1967—of the artist many regard as the most influential American painter of this century. It would be hard to fault the installation or the choice of works: in addition to many smaller drawings and canvases, the Modern has secured all of the major large pictures, from the mural that Peggy Guggenheim commissioned for her foyer in 1943 to the late "Blue Poles" (1952). Through Feb. 2. . . . ¶ "New Photography: Jeanne Dunning, Olafur Eliasson, Rachel Harrison, Sam Taylor-Wood," the fourteenth installment of the museum's survey series. Through Jan. 12. . . . ¶ "Focus: Pollock and Printmaking." Through Feb. 2. . . . ¶ "Dubuffet to de Kooning: Express-

sionist Prints from Europe and America." Through Feb. 2. . . . ¶ "Structure and Surface: Contemporary Japanese Textiles." Through Jan. 26. . . . ¶ An exhibition of lamps by Ingo Maurer and furniture by Fernando and Humberto Campana, in the project room. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 6; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:30.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—"Rendezvous: Masterpieces from the Centre Georges Pompidou and the Guggenheim Museums" includes works by Picasso, Matisse, Chagall, Kandinsky, and other modern masters. Through Jan. 24. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM SoHo, 575 Broadway, at Prince St. (423-3500)—"Premises," a spectacular disaster in which two mediocre exhibitions (one of postwar French architecture, the other of postwar French installation and performance art) collide, to the benefit of neither. Through Jan. 10. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Saturday evenings until 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—The Duane Hanson (1925-96) retrospective brings together a comprehensive selection of the artist's amazingly realistic re-creations of middle-class Americans: life-size casts of construction workers, a tough-looking cop, a weary maid, a bored flea-market vender. The use of actual clothing and objects completes the illusion; in "Man on a Lawn Mower," finished shortly before the artist's death, and exhibited for the first time here, the figure is seated on a tractor, clutching a can of soda. The tone of ironic condescension, however faint, sometimes overpowers the work: it can be difficult, even on the second or third glance, to distinguish the real tacky tourist from the sculptured tacky tourist, and the viewer is left with only the technique to admire (it is, admittedly, mighty impressive). Whatever you do, don't stand still. Through Feb. 28. . . . ¶ An exhibition of fifty-two Brice Marden drawings. Through March 28. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY, Central Park W. at 79th St. (769-5100)—"Butterfly Conservatory: Tropical Butterflies Alive in Winter" offers some four hundred examples of lepidoptera in a specially constructed vivarium. Through Feb. 28. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—"Royal Persian Paintings: The Qajar Epoch," an exhibition of a hundred large-scale court and religious paintings, manuscripts, and enamels done in the representational style that flourished under the dynasty that ruled Iran from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century. Through Jan. 24. . . . ¶ "Japonism in Fashion: Japan Dresses the West." Through Feb. 14. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

DIA CENTER FOR THE ARTS, 548 W. 22nd St. (989-5566)—The museum has installed sixty of the hundred and two "Shadow" paintings by Andy Warhol in its collection. The works were executed in 1979 by photographing a cardboard maquette and then enlarging the image. The effects, especially considering the variations of silk-screened colors Warhol imposed, are sometimes tenuously representational, sometimes entirely abstract. On the whole, these paintings convey a subdued menace, a dour melancholia appropriate to their title; one senses lurking danger. This diffuse but powerful feeling is also present in other roughly contemporaneous Warhol series, such as the "Skulls." At the same time, it reflects his interest in abstraction (see, for instance, the "Camouflage" series at Gagosian in SoHo). . . . ¶ "Excursus: Homage to the Square." Robert Irwin's reconfiguration of "Prologue: x183," his installation here last spring. Irwin, the preëmi-

nent artist of the California Light and Space movement, creates extraordinary effects through small variations in material. He again uses translucent scrims to divide the museum's third floor into eighteen rooms, but this time he has changed his lighting fixtures. In "Prologue," he combined white fluorescents with natural light coming through the windows to create subtle shifts as one navigated the chambers. In the current installation, he has introduced colored fluorescent lights. The mysterious sense of dematerialization remains, but the shifting hues produce greater drama. Like its predecessor, this is one of the most beautiful exhibitions in New York in years. (Open Thursdays through Sundays, noon to 6.)

FASHION INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, Seventh Ave. at 27th St. (217-5800)—"Claire McCardell and the American Look" brings out the practical ensembles that the designer called "comfort wear": play clothes, "Pop-Over" dresses, swimsuits, sportswear, and wrap-and-tie outfits suitable for the fashionably active American woman of the forties and fifties. Through Jan. 9. . . . ¶ "Rethinking Shearing." O.K. Who'd like to start? Through Jan. 9. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, noon to 8; Saturdays, 10 to 5.)

JAPAN SOCIETY, 333 E. 47th St. (832-1155)—"The Art of Twentieth Century Zen" is an admirable exhibition of paintings, calligraphy, tea bowls, and other objects reflecting the revitalization of this Buddhist sect. The exquisite scrolls of koans and ink drawings aren't really works of art in the ordinary sense but, rather, contemplative aids to spiritual enlightenment. Many of them are soberly philosophical, such as a series of calligraphic haiku by the master Nantenbo (1839-1925); others are comical vignettes of humble scenes with profound implications. Mamiya Eishu's painting of a boy who has found a runaway ox—the animal stares mutely at the boy, the boy gazes quizzically at the viewer—possesses the waggish charm of a Thurber cartoon. Through Jan. 10. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 5.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

GABRIEL OROZCO—Dreary sculptures made out of Styrofoam and other whitish material, a tiny house with room for only a single chair, some slight assemblages, and one amazing Ping-Pong table. The table has four sides, all rounded, with a lily pond smack in the middle. Four paddles and numerous Ping-Pong balls have been provided, and apparently the staff has been instructed to allow visitors to play like banshees (on a recent visit, two art lovers were caroming shots off the gallery walls). The shape encourages the free-wheeling invention of rules and a nearly simultaneous violation of them, an arrangement so forgiving that virtually no skill is required for pleasurable participation—perhaps the giddiest example in recent memory of art's ability to liberate. Through Jan. 9. (Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 977-7160. Open Mondays.)

LUCAS SAMARAS—A major exhibition of new work, with gold jewelry, self-portraits on X-ray film, pencil drawings, and an enigmatic installation of found bead necklaces. The jewelry—heavy cuffs and necklaces designed in chicken wire and cast using the ancient lost-wax process—is deliberately coarse, even barbaric, invoking the legendary splendor of Samaras's native Macedonia; the self-portraits reveal an angry, painfully thin old man, the artist as dispossessed prophet. The juxtapositions create a challenging paradox, bouncing the viewer back and forth from images of the naked body to uselessly luxurious adornments for it. Through Jan. 9. (Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 421-3292.)

ANDY WARHOL (1928-87)—A charming collection of drawings of high heels, cats, flowers, gâteaux, and ladies, from the fifties, before

A LETTER FELL INTO OUR HANDS THE OTHER DAY, THE MATTER OF WHICH DESERVES A WIDER PUBLIC.

Dear sirs,

*When I am lonely I reach for
The Macallan and when I have
company it's a must.*

*When on occasions I am sad
The Malt is a great comforter, but
when I am glad it improves the
shining hour.*

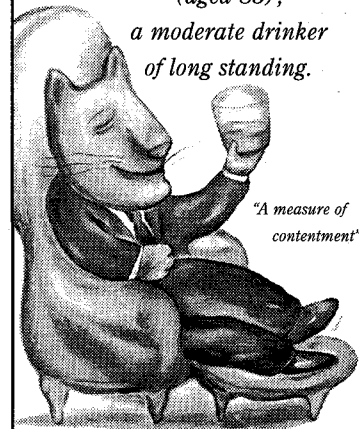
*When I am not hungry it is
my favourite aperitif and I toy
with it – when I am hungry I use
it to counteract the tendency
to overeat.*

*If I am ill I take a modicum
a day with water, but if I am
well I increase the dose –
without water.*

*Otherwise I seldom touch
the stuff except, of course, when I
am thirsty!!*

Yours, etc.

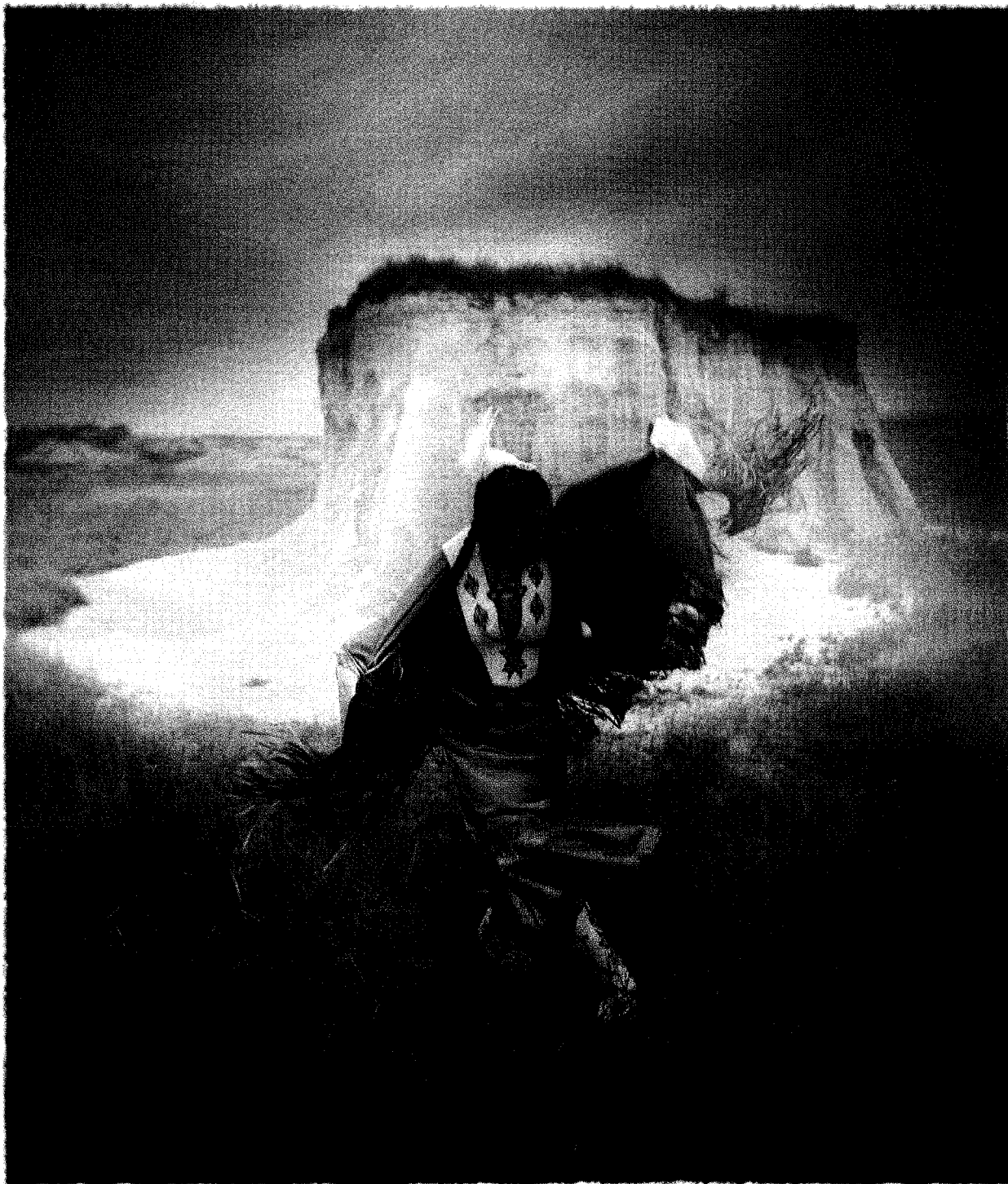
Campbell MacGregor
(aged 85),
a moderate drinker
of long standing.



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ALLER UNTIL YOU TOO CAN
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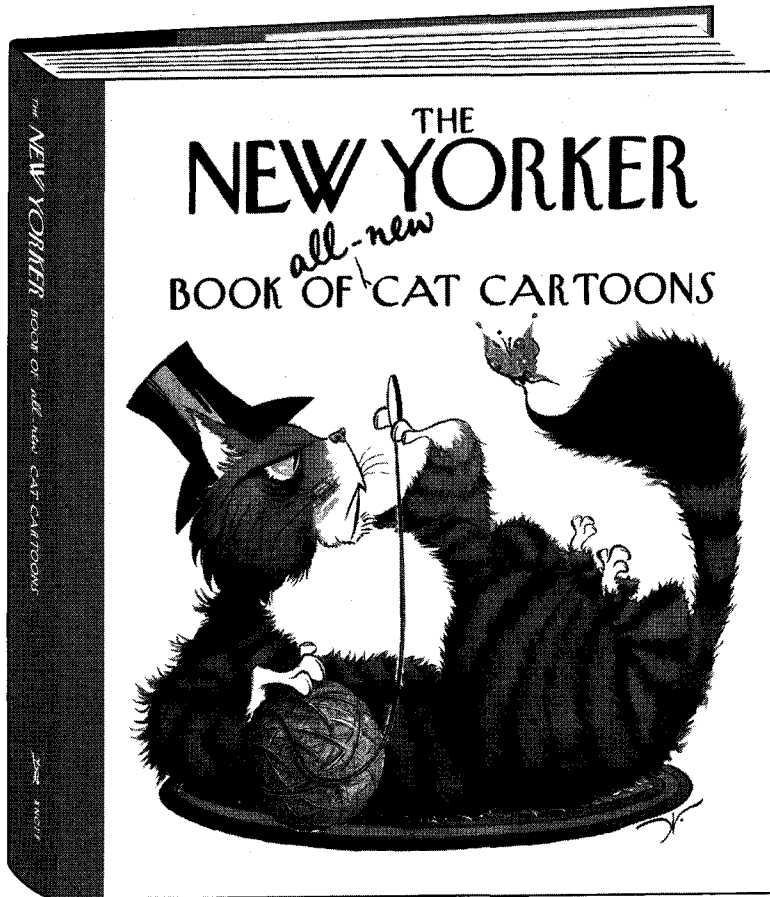
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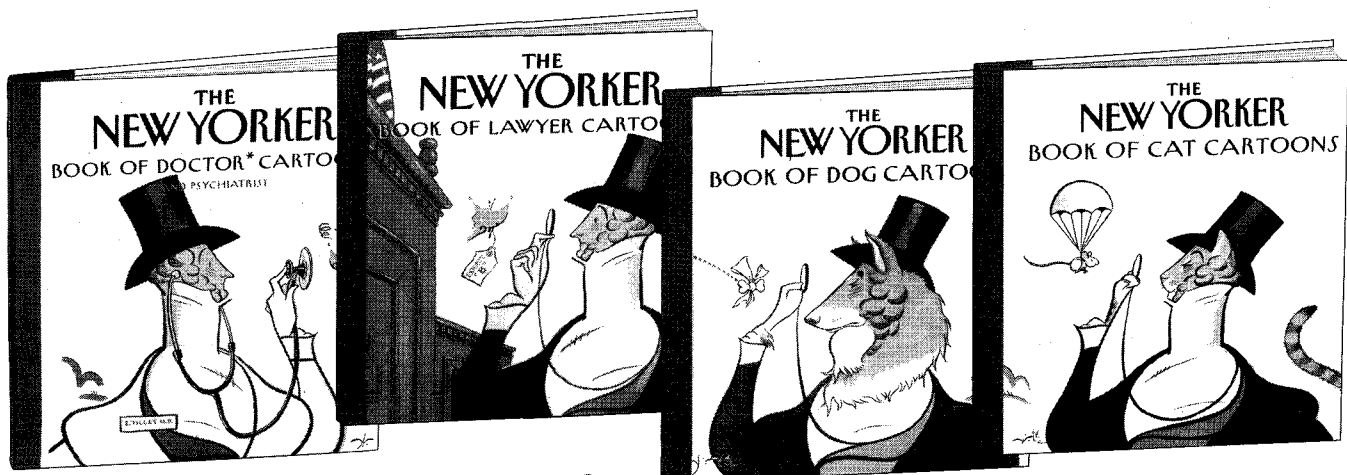
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"Teenager Pinning Her Hair at the Jukebox," by Bruce Davidson, at I.C.P.

the artist discovered Pop, and a suite of large, loose graphite drawings of nose-gays, from 1974. The ink works are all executed in his characteristic broken lines, occasionally enlivened with silver or gold leaf and brilliant tempera, and they're puffs of pure style. In some of them the whimsy cloys, as in a drawing of faux-naïve putti, but none of these works are as innocent as they seem. Through Jan. 16. (Sheehan, 20 W. 57th St. 489-3331. See also Downtown Short List.)

SHORT LIST—**JOHN ALEXANDER** and **PATRICK MIMRAN**, Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. 541-4900. Open Mondays; both shows through Jan. 9. . . . **STEVEN ASSAEL**, Forum, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 355-4545. Through Jan. 9. . . . **WALTER CIO CALDAS**, Galerie Lelong, 20 W. 57th St. 315-0470. Through Jan. 16. . . . **WILLIAM DUNLAP**, Hirschl & Adler, 21 E. 70th St. 535-8810. Through Jan. 30. . . . **WES MILLS** and **JULIE ALLEN**, Helman, 20 W. 57th St. 245-2888. Both shows through Jan. 16. . . . **SIGMAR POLKE**, Werner, 21 E. 67th St. 988-1623. Open Mondays; through Jan. 16. . . . **ENA SWANSEA**, Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. 980-5454. Through Jan. 9.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

MICHAEL BEVILACQUA—Acrylic-on-canvas paintings that build bright graphic elements (band logos, race-car decals, designer labels, etc.) into big, busy, CinemaScope attractions. "Split Screen," for example, is a sort of portrait of the artist's wife (a rock critic, symbolized in many of the works by a silhouette of Björk), which is filled with references to the couple's shared milestones: favorite songs and movies, bad hotel experiences, their child's favorite toys, and so on. Very zesty hermeticism. Through Jan. 16. (Fredericks, 504 W. 22nd St. 633-6555.)

ELLEN CANTOR—"Remember Me," a single-channel video projection. In a previous work, Cantor exploited the weird formal similarities between "The Sound of Music" and "The Texas Chainsaw Massacre." The effect was bizarre and at times hilarious. This video juxtaposes images drawn from Antonioni with dialogue taken from Casavetes, and vice versa. While undeniably skillful in her suturing of these sources, "Remember Me" remains largely an academic exercise in experimental film. Through Jan. 26. (XL, 504 W. 22nd St. 462-4111.)

MOIRA DRYER (1957-92) and **SHIRLEY WIITASALO**—Dryer, who died several years ago of cancer, was regarded as one of the most promising abstract painters of her generation. The works displayed here, mostly from the eighties, recall a number of her characteristic

formal innovations—e.g., the inclusion of freestanding sculptural elements as integral parts of her works. The better ones display her characteristic aqueous, drizzly handling of paint. Pairing Dryer with Wiitasalo was a good idea—the latter also favors washed-out, spatially ambiguous images. Through Jan. 23. (Greene Naftali, 526 W. 26th St. 463-7770.)

FÉLIX GONZÁLEZ-TORRES (1957-96)—Not exactly a retrospective, this show focusses on the artist's work from 1986 to 1990. Some of them are well known: his signature stacks of paper, which mimic Minimalism in form even as the invitation to take the sheets implies a criticism of the self-contained art object. Other pieces—round canvases to which he has affixed small photos of crowds—are less familiar. There is a delicacy and unease in these works, although within the vast space of the Rosen gallery many of them seem stranded, and their intimate quality is lost. Through Jan. 23. (525 W. 24th St. 627-6000.)

RACHEL LACHOWICZ—The artist's earlier work relied on parodic appropriation of such modernist bigwigs as Carl Andre, Yves Klein, Gerhard Richter, and Ellsworth Kelly. But her versions of the masculine masterworks typically were made with cosmetics; her Richter-esque color chart, for example, was executed in eyeshadow. In this outing, Lachowicz remains faithful to beauty products while expanding her repertoire. Wall-mounted aluminum-and-eyeshadow paintings allude to modernism but appear less indebted to the male subjects of her earlier, aggressive appropriations. Some of them are very elegant, and push the adjective "pretty" beyond a feminine diminutive. Through Jan. 10. (Cristineros, 529 W. 20th St. 206-0297.)

SHORT LIST—**DOUG AITKEN**, 303 Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 255-1121. Through Jan. 16. . . . **VERNE DAWSON**, Gavin Brown's Enterprise, 436 W. 15th St. 627-5258. Through Jan. 16. . . . **VINCENT GALLO**, Nosei, 530 W. 22nd St. 741-8695. Through Jan. 10. . . . **TIMUR NOVIKOV** and **JAAN TOOMIK**, I-20, at 529 W. 20th St. 645-1100. Both shows through Jan. 23. . . . **GARY SIMMONS**, Metro Pictures, 519 W. 24th St. 206-7100. Through Jan. 16.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

ALFRED JENSEN—A group of paintings by an artist who began in the prevailing Abstract Expressionist mode but soon developed his own eccentric style, which favors grids and sequences of numbers rendered in heavy impastos. The purpose of the exhibition, evidently, is to reintroduce the work in light of recent trends: his interest in systems and

information can be seen as a precursor to that of many of the younger artists now working in a similar style (for instance, Matthew Ritchie and Chan Schatz, who are represented by Basilico). Through Jan. 9. (Basilico Fine Arts, 26 Wooster St. 966-1831.)

JANNIS KOUNELLIS—One of the founding figures of the Italian Arte Povera movement, Kounellis, in his recent shows, has tended toward the lackluster. But within the vast cavern of the Ace gallery, he pulls off a terrific coup de théâtre. Playing off Minimalism's fascination with industrial materials, Kounellis often uses very large steel I-beams in the numerous sculptures on display. On the other hand, in keeping with Arte Povera's fascination with natural materials, he resorts to worn burlap sacks and (perhaps in a throwback to an infamous piece that included eleven live horses) several caged starlings. Through Feb. 6. (Ace, 275 Hudson St. 255-5599.)

SHORT LIST—**FRANCIS BACON**, Shafrazi, 119 Wooster St. 274-9300. Through Jan. 16. . . . **GREGORY CRANE**, Pelavin, 13 Jay St. 925-9424. Through Dec. 31. . . . **MANUEL NERI**, Cowles, 420 West Broadway. 925-3500. Through Jan. 30. . . . **DAVID RABINOWITZ**, Blum, 99 Wooster St. 343-0441. Through Feb. 5. . . . **ANDY WARHOL**, Gagosian, 136 Wooster St. 228-2828. Through Jan. 9.

PHOTOGRAPHY

DICK ARENTZ—Panoramic platinum prints of sites in Europe, Canada, and the United States, many of which—the famous White House ruin at Canyon de Chelly, a stately tree in a Scottish field—look like they might have looked a hundred years ago. Arentz's Grand Canal, in Venice, is hazy, romantic, and timeless, but his plain image of the lighthouse at Peggy's Cove, Nova Scotia, taken in 1997, is infused with sadness. Through Jan. 16. (Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. 517-3766.)

VIRGINIA BEAHAN & LAURA MCPHEE—"No Ordinary Land," a selection of meditative, often mesmerizing color landscapes of places ranging from a burned-out foundation of a home in the Santa Monica Mountains to a verdant tea plantation dotted with flame trees in Sri Lanka. Through Feb. 6. (Burden, 20 E. 23rd St. 505-5555.)

LYNN GEESAMAN—A survey of the artist's black-and-white landscapes (and a few new color ones) in her signature ultra-romantic-yet-not-too-sugary style. In Geesaman's lens, the dike lands of Belgium are a sanctum of eternal calm, and the sublime parks of France, especially Sceaux, glow with a cold, linear authority. Through Jan. 9. (Richardson, 560 Broadway. 343-1255.)

CHARLES PRATT—"The Edge of the City," an engrossing selection of vintage black-and-white prints of urban life in New York and New Jersey in the early sixties. Through Jan. 23. (Mann, 42 E. 76th St. 570-1223.)

ALEX WEBB—Striking color images of life along the Amazon, from the tropical lowlands in Brazil to the mountains of Peru. Through Jan. 9. (Leica, 670 Broadway. 777-3051. Opens Saturdays at noon.)

"CAMERA WORK"—Photogravures from Stieglitz's legendary turn-of-the-century journal by, among others, Steichen, Käsebier, Coburn, and Strand. Through Jan. 7. (Platinum, 551 W. 22nd St. 352-0070.)

"IMAGES OF MILES"—Black-and-white photographs of the trumpeter, by William Gottlieb, Herb Snitzer, Chuck Stewart, and Lee Tanner, among others. Through Jan. 10. (Jazz Gallery, 290 Hudson St., at Spring St. 242-1063. Opens at 1; open Sundays.)

"SKIN/DEEP"—A historical survey of "interior imaging," from X-rays to M.R.I.s, including works by Andrew Bush, Helmut Newton, Vik Muniz, and Annie Leibovitz. Through Jan. 16. (Saul, 560 Broadway. 431-0747.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY—During the summer of 1959, twenty-five-year-old Bruce Davidson's world was the corner of

17th Street and Eighth Avenue, in Brooklyn where he hung with a teen-age gang called the Jokers. All the tight-T-shirt-wearing, tattooed hoodlums (by today's standards they look clean-cut) were tough and indisputably cool; none appear miffed by a photographer shooting them at their regular haunts—Prospect Park, Helen's Candy Store, underneath the Coney Island boardwalk. Davidson captured his subjects at unexpectedly serene moments—a couple embracing in the back seat of a car, a girl pinning up her hair in the reflection of a cigarette machine—bringing to the surface a softness in presumably hardened youth. Still, a loneliness pervades these shadowy black-and-white prints, reminding us that these kids' homes were the streets, and probably would be for some time. Through March 7. . . . ¶ "Intimate City: The Photographs of Thomas Roma." Through March 7. (1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. 860-1777. Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 to 5; Fridays, 10 to 8; and Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 6.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY MIDTOWN—"Man Ray: Photography and Its Double," a large show of works from the artist's archives, which are housed at the Pompidou Center, in Paris. Through Jan. 24. (Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. 860-1777. Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 to 5; Fridays, 10 to 8; and Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 6.)

SHORT LIST—**ANSEL ADAMS**, Danziger, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St. 734-5300. Through Jan. 9. . . . **BRUCE CRATSLEY**, Wessel and O'Connor, 242 W. 26th St. 242-8811. Open Sundays; through Feb. 14. . . . **LYNN DAVIS**, Houk, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 750-7070. Through Jan. 16. . . . **PHILIP-LORCA DI CORCIA**, Pace Wildenstein, 142 Greene St. 431-9224. Through Jan. 16. . . . **LARRY GIANETTINO**, Ricco/Maresca, 529 W. 20th St. 627-4819. Through Jan. 16. . . . **KENRO IZU**, Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. 334-0010. Through Jan. 23. . . . **GEORGE KRAUSE**, Gallery 292, at 120 Wooster St. 431-0292. Through Jan. 23. . . . **NICHOLAS NIXON**, Zabriskie, 41 E. 57th St. 752-1223. Through Jan. 23. . . . **FAZAL SHEIKH**, Pace Wildenstein MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 759-7999. Through Jan. 16.

(See the museum listings for a photography exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA—**DIE FLEDERMAUS**, in a new version that features a book and English-language dialogue by Betty Comden and Adolph Green, with Carol Vaness, Elizabeth Norberg-Schulz, Victoria Livengood, Paul Charles Clarke, Neil Rosenshein, William Stone, and (in the speaking role of Frosch) actor Max Wright; conducted by Patrick Summers. (Jan. 6 at 8.) . . . With Pamela Coburn, Ms. Norberg-Schulz, Jochen Kowalski, Michael Schade, Mr. Rosenshein, Earle Patriarco, and Mr. Wright; Mr. Summers. (Jan. 9 at 8.) . . . **LA TRAVIATA**, with Ainhwa Arteta, Marcello Giordani, and Vladimir Chernov; Carlo Rizzi. (Jan. 7 at 8.) . . . **LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR**, with Elizabeth Futral, Ramón Vargas, Anthony Michaels-Moore, and Paul Plishka; Mr. Rizzi. (Jan. 8 at 8.) . . . With Ruth Ann Swenson, Mr. Vargas, Mr. Michaels-Moore, and Alastair Miles; Mr. Rizzi. (Jan. 12 at 8.) . . . **KATYA KABANOVA**, by Janáček, with Catherine Malfitano, Eva Randová, Katarina Karnéus, Peter Straka, Mark Baker, Paul Charles Clarke, and Sergei Koptchak; Charles Mackerras. (Jan. 9 at 1:30.) . . . **WERTHER**, in a little-known version that Massenet prepared in order to bring the title role (conceived for a tenor) within the compass of a lyric baritone; with Rebecca Evans, Susan Graham, and Thomas Hampson; Donald Runnicles. (Jan. 11 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

LISTENING BOOTH: CLEARING THE DESK

Before 1998 fades further into memory, let's offer a few words of hearty recommendation about some of the recordings that most enriched the classical catalogue during the year. Admirers of keyboard playing should take note of pianist Angela Hewitt's imaginative rendering of **BACH'S DAS WOHLTEMPERIRTE CLAVIER, BOOK ONE** (on Hyperion, two disks); András Schiff's profound excavations into little-known Schumann, coupled with a rich-toned traversal of **KREISLERIANA** (Teldec); and, for those who can tolerate their composers alive, Stephen Hough's **NEW YORK VARIATIONS** recital (Hyperion), especially for his brilliant performances of John Corigliano's "Etude Fantasy" and George Tsontakis's "Ghost Variations." **PASSACAGLIA BWV 582** (Signum) provides five renditions of Bach's famous C-Minor Passacaglia, well played on Baroque and Romantic organs and in solo-piano, piano-four-hands, and orchestral transcriptions. Serious listeners will find it a fascinating investigation of what "interpretation" can mean.

In the concerto repertoire, Martha Argerich's razzle-dazzle readings of **PROKOFIEV'S FIRST AND THIRD PIANO CONCERTOS**, coupled with **BARTÓK'S THIRD**, are as spectacular as one might expect (with Charles Dutoit leading the Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal; EMI Classics). Probably every flutist in the land ran out to buy a copy of **LOWELL LIEBERMANN'S FLUTE CONCERTO**—part Prokofiev, part John Williams, all scrumptious—as soon as they heard James Galway's gorgeous rendition, with the composer leading the London Mozart Players (RCA Victor/BMG); so should you.

The early-music catalogue benefits from the **HILLIARD ENSEMBLE'S LASSUS** (ECM New Series), in which the finely honed men's quartet gives radiant readings of Lassus's Requiem and his "Prophetiae Sibyllarum," a weird, ultra-chromatic collision of Christian and pagan theology. **THE FLOATING CITY** (Hyperion), with His Majestys Sagbutts and Cornetts, brings period-instrument brass and string sonorities to bear on music by Dario Castello and Giovanni Picchi, two of Monteverdi's Venetian contemporaries. **ALESSANDRO SCARLATTI CANTATAS, VOLUME II** (Conifer Classics) contains six such works, all secular, dramatically rendered by countertenor David Daniels, with support from the Arcadian Academy (Nicholas McGegan directing); each is lovely, but perhaps they're best spread over several sittings.

Philippe Herreweghe's Collegium Vocale turns out yet another intellectually engaging release of Bach cantatas, three of them here

under the title **MIT FRIED UND FREUD** (Harmonia Mundi). Sacred music gets a modernist boon with **PENDECKI'S CREDO** (Hänssler Classic), an expansive, post-Mahlerian exploration, with Helmut Rilling firmly conducting the Oregon Bach Festival Orchestra and Choir plus a stellar lineup of soloists that includes soprano Juliane Banse and bass-baritone Thomas Quasthoff.

Among song recordings, **SCHUBERT LIEDER**, featuring tenor Ian Bostridge (with pianist Julius Drake; EMI Classics), is one for the ages; though endowed with a modest voice, Bostridge is a great communicator, and his program of chestnuts increases the disk's appeal for casual music lovers. An immensely important historical release is **THE HUGO WOLF SOCIETY, 1931-1938; THE COMPLETE EDITION** (EMI Classics, five disks), nearly a hundred and fifty of that composer's lieder, performed by fourteen legendary singers of the nineteen-thirties.

We shouldn't be surprised anymore by the chameleonlike skill with which soprano Dawn Upshaw reinvents her voice to create compelling vocal characters—eight, on **THE WORLD SO WIDE** (with David Zinman conducting the Orchestra of St. Luke's; Nonesuch), from as many modern American operas. For a complete opera recording, check out **HAYDN'S L'ISOLA DISABITATA** (with David Golub leading the Padova Chamber Orchestra; Arabesque, two disks), with mezzo-soprano Susanne Mentzer wearing the starring role like a glove, abetted by soprano Ying Huang (radiant), tenor John Aler (in excellent voice), and baritone-on-the-rise Christopher Schaldenbrand; an exercise in Rousselian philosophy, it's ever so eighteenth century but not a bit Mozartean.

Chamber music, anyone? The Kronos String Quartet's **ALFRED SCHNITTKE: THE COMPLETE STRING QUARTETS** (Nonesuch, two disks) begins to suggest the reason that the Russian composer's death, in August, was so loudly lamented. For more refined chamber playing, turn to **MEYERSON'S STRING QUINTETS** (Hyperion), as played, with great transparency, by members of the Raphael Ensemble (one of the world's few full-time string sextets).

The avalanche of Gershwin disks issued for his centennial can safely be winnowed to one: **FROM GERSHWIN'S TIME** (Sony Classical, two disks), a compilation of rare recordings pressed between 1920 and 1945, featuring musicians who helped define the sassy, unpretentious musical style of his time. Who could ask for anything more?



NATIONAL OPERA ASSOCIATION—Stagings of two works that won the National Chamber Opera Contest: Milton Granger's "Talk Opera" and Philip Hagemann's "Paris and Oenone" (a première). (Borden Auditorium, Manhattan School of Music, Broadway at 122nd St. 749-2802, ext. 428. Jan. 10 at 2:30.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

AMERICAN COMPOSERS ORCHESTRA—Dennis Russell Davies leads a program devoted to concerted piano works by Gershwin and three composers with whom he came into contact. The program comprises the première of Vernon Duke's C-Major Piano Concerto, a work written for, but never played by, Arthur Rubinstein (here orchestrated by Scott Dunn, who appears as the soloist); Oscar Levant's Piano Concerto (with Alan Feinberg); Gershwin's Second Rhapsody (with Leon Bates); and Ravel's Concerto for the Left Hand (with Ursula Oppens). (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Jan. 10 at 3.)

RUSSIAN CHAMBER CHORUS OF NEW YORK—Inasmuch as Orthodox Christmas falls on January 7, this accomplished ensemble will still be in a sufficiently seasonal mood to offer Christmas works from seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Ukraine and Russia, as well as traditional carols. The program includes Dimitri Bortniansky's "Coro per il Natale" and works by, among others, Artemy Vedel and Archimandrite Feofan. Nikolai Kachanov directs. (Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. Jan. 10 at 4. For information about tickets, call 928-1402.)

JUPITER SYMPHONY—Jens Nygaard conducts Dittersdorf's "Symphony in the Style of Five Nations" (a sort of textbook on the musical tastes of late-eighteenth-century Europe), Fauré's "Shylock" Suite (with tenor Larry Woodard), and pieces featuring violinist Charles Castleman: Spohr's Violin Concerto No. 9 and three Czardáses by Jenő Hubay. (Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, 152 W. 66th St. Jan. 11 at 2 and 7 and Jan. 12 at 8. For information about tickets, call 799-1259.)

MEMBERS OF THE ISRAEL PHILHARMONIC—Fifty of them, to be precise, in a benefit concert featuring Itzhak Perlman and Pinchas Zukerman as violinists and conductors. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Jan. 12 at 7.)

RECITALS

PARTHENIA—A consort of five viols, with soprano Suzanne Peck, in a program of works by Byrd, Purcell, and other English composers. (St. Paul's Church, 199 Carroll St., at Clinton St., Brooklyn. Jan. 6 at 8. For information about tickets, call 718-457-7892.)

TALK-AND-PLAYS—This week, two pianists offer performance-discussions that focus on Beethoven. Jan. 6 at 8: Jeffrey Siegel. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100.) ... Jan. 8 at 7: Ruth Laredo. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949.)

POULENC AT 100—With all the brouhaha surrounding the centennial of Gershwin's birth and the semicentennial of Richard Strauss's death, Francis Poulenc (1898-1962) is not getting his due this season. Possibly no twentieth-century composer has provided as much wicked delight as he did, and few have rivalled his spiritual core. Speaking of French composers in general, and surely describing himself in particular, Poulenc once said, "We realize that sombreness and good humor are not mutually exclusive. Our composers, too, write profound music, but when they do, it is leavened with that lightness of spirit without which life would be unendurable." Fortunately, the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, currently displaced from its Lincoln Center digs, is offering quite a few Poulenc programs this season, including one to mark his hundredth birthday. Pianist Grant Johansen, a longtime exponent of the composer's music, performs the "Suite Française" (which he introduced in its American premiere, in 1934, though he learned only years later, from Poulenc, that it had been a premiere) and his own transcription of a suite from the ballet "Les Animaux Modèles" (a version Poulenc approved for publication). For the pièce de résistance, actor Tony Randall assists Mr. Johansen in Poulenc's melodrama "Histoire de Babar" (based on the Jean de Brunhoff story). (Great Hall, Cooper Union, Third Ave. at 7th St. Jan. 7 at 7. No tickets necessary.)

BARGEMUSIC—Presenting Beethoven's C-Major Cello Sonata and his F-Major Violin Sonata (the "Spring"), as well as Mendelssohn's D-Minor Piano Trio. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-4061. Jan. 7 at 7:30 and Jan. 10 at 4.)

MUSIC BY STEVE REICH—The composer's ensemble offers "Clapping Music," "Different Trains," and other pieces. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. Jan. 7 at 8.)

MARGARET LENG TAN AND TOBY TWINING—The pianist and the vocalist team up with actor John Ventimiglia, as narrator, for excerpts from Mr. Twining's Hesse-inspired "Wandering." Also on the program is Aaron Jay Kernis's piano suite "Before Sleep and Dreams," as well as "The Raven," a melodrama set to Poe's poem, written in 1908 by Arthur Bergh (an American composer, conductor, and violinist who spent his later years as a librarian for motion-picture companies in Hollywood). (Pace Downtown Theatre, Spruce St. between Nassau and Gold Sts. 346-1715. Jan. 8 at 8.)

GUARNERI QUARTET—The foursome plays string quartets by Juan Crisóstomo Arriaga (the first by this Spanish Beethoven manqué, who died at the age of nineteen) and Grieg (in G Minor), as well as Dvořák's Terzetto. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. Jan. 9 at 8.)

SONATA MARATHON—The "Sundays on the Island" series presents six pianists performing six Beethoven sonatas: the "Appassionata" (with Makiko Hirata), the "Moonlight" (with Michiyo Morikawa), the "Tempest" (Op. 31, No. 2, with Monica Chung), and the composer's last three—in E Major (Op. 109, with Asaf Blasberg), A-Flat Major

(Op. 110, with Richard Kogan), and C Minor (Op. 111, with Yuri Kim). (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., City Island, the Bronx. 718-885-2478. Jan. 10 at noon.)

HESPERUS—The trio, whose members evince a penchant for improvisation and a musical philosophy that combines early music with popular traditions, performs a program that focusses on Eastern European repertoire. (Kosciuszko Foundation, 15 E. 65th St. 734-2130. Jan. 10 at 3 and Jan. 12 at noon.)

MUSIC BY ROBERT STARER—Soprano Danielle Woerner and five instrumentalists celebrate the composer's seventy-fifth birthday, two days after the fact. (Christ and St. Stephen's Church, 120 W. 69th St. Jan. 10 at 3. Tickets at the door.)

RICHARD ERICKSON—The organist presents an all-Bach concert comprising the C-Major and D-Minor Trios; the C-Major Toccata, Adagio, and Fugue; and the "Exercitium," for pedal alone. (Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Central Park W. at 65th St. Jan. 10 at 5. Admission by contribution.)

YURI KIM—Performing Bach's Partita No. 6 and Beethoven's G-Major Sonata (Op. 31, No. 1). (Hotel Wales, Madison Ave. at 92nd St. Jan. 10 at 6 and 8. No tickets necessary.)

SEQUITUR—The modern-music ensemble offers works (including six premières) by Thomas Adès, Harrison Birtwistle, Simon Bainbridge, Judith Weir, and Martin Bresnick, among others. (Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St. 219-3055. Jan. 10 and Jan. 12 at 8.)

ALSO OF INTEREST

HAI-KYUNG SUH: Piano works by Schumann, Liszt, Chopin, and Isang Yung. (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Jan. 9 at 8:30.) ... **L'ANTICA MUSICA NEW YORK**: Seventeenth-century German music. (St. Bartholomew's Church, Park Ave. at 50th St. 378-0248. Jan. 10 at 3.) ... **FRITZ GEARHART**: Violinist, with pianist John Owings, performing Grieg's three violin sonatas. (Weill Recital Hall. 247-7800. Jan. 12 at 8.) ... **MANNES OPERA**: Presenting "Don Giovanni." (Mannes College of Music, 150 W. 85th St. Jan. 12 and Jan. 14 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

FULL STEAM AHEAD!—The eighty-ninth edition of the New York National Boat Show has put into port, bringing warm-weather dreams to old salts and aspiring captains. In addition to the thousand-odd luxury motor yachts, speedboats, and sailboats on display, there will be fishing seminars, radio-controlled-model-boat races (around a ten-foot replica of New York City), and information on that absolutely indispensable boating accessory consumer financing. Bring a pen. (Jacob K. Javits Convention Center, Eleventh Ave. between 34th and 39th Sts. Through Jan. 10. For information on hours, call 922-1212.)

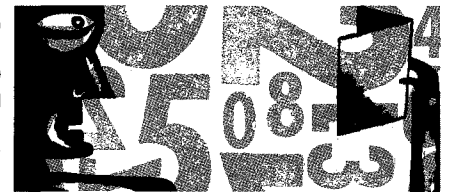
READINGS—Jan. 7 at 7: By Neal Gabler, from his book "Life the Movie: How Entertainment Conquered Reality." (Barnes & Noble, Broadway at 66th St. No tickets necessary.) ... Jan. 11 at 7: Actor Robert Sean Leonard and Acting Company members Mary Lou Rosato, Erika Rolfsrud, and Andrew Weems offer a staged reading of "Smash," Jeffrey Hatcher's adaptation of George Bernard Shaw's novel "An Unsocial Socialist." Directed by John Rando. (The Salon, 432 E. 91st St. For more information, call 564-3510.)

TALKS—Jan. 7 at 7: Art critics Carter Ratcliff and Barbara Rose join New York University fine-arts professor Robert Rosenblum for a discussion about Andy Warhol as an abstract artist. Tom Sokolowski, director of the Andy Warhol Museum, in Pittsburgh, is the moderator. (Gagosian Gallery, 136 Wooster St. 228-2828.) ... Jan. 10 at 2: Following a screening of Paul Schrader's latest film, "Affliction," the director will speak about it and take questions. (American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria. 718-784-0077.)

BOOK CURRENTS

Numbers Racket

FOR Ivor Grattan-Guinness, a professor of the history of math and logic at Middlesex University, in England, the story of how numbers were invented and harnessed is a passionate, physical saga. In his **NORTON HISTORY OF THE MATHEMATICAL SCIENCES**, Grattan-Guinness traces the use of numbers in arenas as



diverse as the marketplace and space exploration. Along the way he unearths African bones etched with the phases of the moon, delights in early geometers' "flirtations with pi," and decries the modern habit of dismissing mathematicians as "mysterious outcasts, removed from polite intellectual life."

Yet mathematicians *are* often loners. Paul Erdős, the subject of Paul Hoffman's **THE MAN WHO LOVED ONLY NUMBERS** (Hyperion), lived out of a suitcase and an orange shopping bag, and once sat with another mathematician in public for an entire hour in total silence. Anne Davenport, the wife of the other man, recalled, "Harold broke the long silence, by saying, 'It is not nought. It is one.' Then all was relief and joy. Everyone around them thought they were mad. Of course, they were." **THE FRENCH MATHEMATICIAN** (Walker & Co.), by Tom Petsinis, is a fictionalized, first-person novel about the hot-blooded French Republican Evariste Galois, who lived in the tumultuous times around Napoleon's death, was arrested for threatening Charles X, and died in a duel at the age of twenty—but not before laying the groundwork for the mathematical field of group theory. The brilliant young boy thought himself superior to his scornful, better-adjusted classmates. "Let them have the present—the future belongs to me," he declared.

In a surprisingly stirring juxtaposition of art and science, Milkweed Editions has produced a collection entitled **VERSE & UNIVERSE: POEMS ABOUT SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS**. In "The Fish in the Stone," Rita Dove indelibly animates a fossilized fish: "he drifts until the moment comes to cast his skeletal blossom . . . He knows why the scientist/in secret delight/strokes the fern's voluptuous braille." And for Sue Owen, the integer zero is sadly "born to live a life/of emptiness, only/child of plus and minus."

Books.

[AT BARNES & NOBLE]

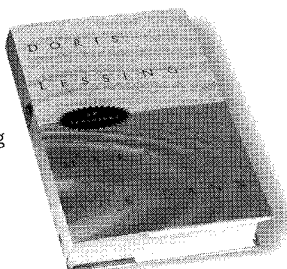
Literary Pursuits

MARA AND DANN

by Doris Lessing

Thousands of years in the future, seven-year-old Mara and her brother Dann are abducted and forced to migrate toward the remnants of destroyed cities. Drawing us into their world of danger and discovery, Lessing demonstrates yet again that she is one of contemporary fiction's most compelling storytellers. (HarperFlamingo)

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by Linda Bruckheimer

A family's cross-country car trip through 1950s America becomes a modern-day comic odyssey in Linda Bruckheimer's stunning debut novel. It's the story of Lila Mae Wooten, her four children and a journey down Route 66 from Kentucky to the end of the road—and the end of innocence. (Dutton)

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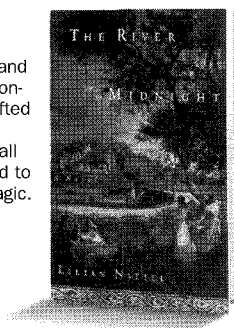
THE RIVER MIDNIGHT

by Lilian Nattel

Already inviting comparison to writers as diverse as Isabel Allende, E.L. Doctorow and Isaac Bashevis Singer, Lilian Nattel demonstrates in this first novel that she is a gifted storyteller of enormous intelligence and humor. She transports us back to a small Jewish shtetl in turn-of-the-century Poland to reveal a world of history, folklore and magic. (Scribner)

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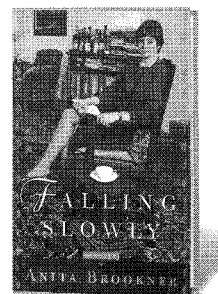


FALLING SLOWLY

by Anita Brookner

From one of the world's finest novelists, author of *Visitors* and the Booker Prize-winning *Hotel du Lac*, comes a moving exploration of two sisters—their conflicted yearnings for love and independence and the complications brought into their lives by men. Wise, elegant and disturbing, *Falling Slowly* represents Anita Brookner at her best. (Random House)

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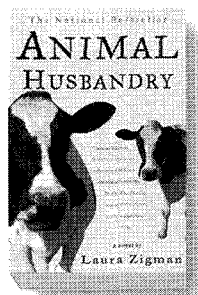
ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

by Laura Zigman

Whip-smart and wickedly funny, this bestselling novel seeks to unlock the secrets of the most perplexing and elusive beast in the animal kingdom: the human male. Jane thought she had finally found the one. Ray had even used the L-word. But in matters of love, she's about to learn that when you play the field, you never know what you'll step in. (Delta)

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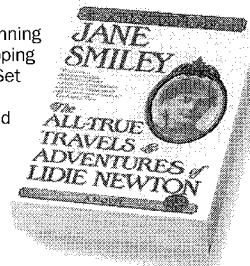


THE ALL-TRUE TRAVELS & ADVENTURES OF LIDIE NEWTON

by Jane Smiley

From the author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *A Thousand Acres*, comes a gripping tale of love, war, revenge and betrayal. Set in the 1850s, it is the story of Lidie Newton, who witnesses the cold-blooded murder of her husband. In search of justice, she makes remarkable discoveries about her world and her changing place in it. (Fawcett)

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FILM NOTES

(If a movie has been reviewed recently in *The Current Cinema*, the date of its review is given.)

AFFLICTION—Reviewed this week in *The Current Cinema*. (Angelika Film Center. . . American Museum of the Moving Image; Jan. 10.)

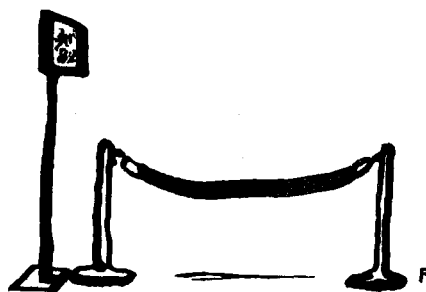
BLUE COLLAR (1978)—The screenwriter Paul Schrader's debut as a director, with a script he wrote with his brother Leonard. Three Detroit auto workers (Richard Pryor, Yaphet Kotto, and Harvey Keitel) rob their union headquarters; the destruction of their friendship as a result of the robbery is used to illustrate the you-can't-win thesis. Shot in an ominous, fatalistic style, the film says that the system grinds all workers down, that it destroys their humanity and their hopes. Though the picture seems dogged and methodical, it is graced with a beautiful performance by Kotto, as a man who's gentle and pleasure-loving, and an unusual one by Pryor, who plays a turncoat with mean, calculating little eyes.—*Pauline Kael* (American Museum of the Moving Image; Jan. 10.)

A BUG'S LIFE—An ant colony tries to save itself from the aggressions of local grasshoppers by employing a bug circus in its defense. The Disney/Pixar animation is pastel-pretty kid stuff, and all the ants talk in cutely self-conscious locutions out of a sitcom, but the bug's-eye view of the world has its surprises and casual enchantments. Co-directed by John Lasseter and Andrew Stanton.—*David Denby* (Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, Orpheum VII, Sutton, and Village East Cinemas. . . Guild; through Jan. 7.)

CENTRAL STATION—Against her nature, Dora (Fernanda Montenegro), an intelligent but nihilistic old bag—a retired schoolteacher who writes letters for illiterate people and then never mails them—leaves Rio de Janeiro with a little boy in tow and takes to the road. The boy's mother has been killed, and his desire to see his missing father stirs something in Dora. The two of them are practically hoboes, but once they leave Rio life opens up for them. This shrewd, tough, and bighearted Brazilian movie, directed by Walter Salles, moves surely and convincingly from utter negation to something like guarded optimism. In Portuguese.—*D.D.* (11/30/98) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Quad Cinema.)

DANCING AT LUGHNASA—Pat O'Connor's film version of Brian Friel's play rattles the bars of a lyrical, well-made work but doesn't burst through them, and in the end one is let down. Meryl Streep stars as the smartest and most thoroughly defeated of the five unmarried Mundy sisters living on a farm in Donegal, Ireland, in the thirties; Michael Gambon, too much becalmed, is the brother who returns from Africa in thrall to the rituals and freedoms of a non-Christian culture. The movie is wistful and touching but not much more. With Kathy Burke, Brid Brennan, Sophie Thompson, and Catherine McCormack. Frank McGuinness did the adaptation.—*D.D.* (59th Street East Cinema, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Union Square.)

ELIZABETH—A grisly, flamboyant account of the Virgin Queen's early days as a monarch. Screenwriter Michael Hirst alters and conflates events that took place over many years—by degrees, Elizabeth (Cate Blanchett), a Protestant surrounded by powerful Catholics, takes control of England by pulling off a kind of internal coup d'état. The means of her ascension is Sir Francis Walsingham (Geoffrey Rush), a perfect Machiavellian character who serves the Queen as



THE MOVIES

adviser, deadly assassin, and spy. Elizabeth's climb to power, however, is a personal disaster: the supple-waisted maiden with long red hair becomes stiff and harsh, emerging from her youth white-faced and trapped in the armor of a thick brocade dress. The movie is a horror film masquerading as a historical pageant. Directed by Shekhar Kapur.—*D.D.* (11/16/98) (Art Greenwich Twin, BAM Rose Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and 19th Street East 6.)

ENEMY OF THE STATE—In this breathlessly paranoid Tony Scott thriller, a young Washington labor lawyer (Will Smith) unwittingly receives some incriminating evidence of wrongdoing by an official (Jon Voight) high up in the National Security Agency. The official wants it back. Despite much blather about the right to privacy, the movie is essentially an endless chase, in which Smith is pursued and spied on by vans, cameras, bugs, tape recorders, satellites, helicopters, computers, voice analyzers, humans, and two spotted owls. The movie goes like the wind, but it's more a technological exercise than anything else.—*D.D.* (Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Embassy 1, Murray Hill Cinemas, Orpheum VII, Sutton, and Union Square.)



At Film Forum 2, Robert Aldrich's "Kiss Me Deadly."

THE GENERAL—John Boorman's deadpan-cool celebration of the real-life Irish thief and populist hero Martin Cahill, who died in 1994. As embodied by the great Irish actor Brendan Gleeson, Cahill may be the least glamorous gangster in motion-picture history. Gleeson has a thick, heavy neck, a massive forehead and jowls, and a large doughy body. Moving along Dublin's streets and alleys with the hood of his jacket pulled over his head, he might be an animated potato sack, or perhaps some round, disconsolate creature—a hedgehog or beaver—raptly concentrating on the terrain before him. Cahill is in fact a criminal genius and a fantastically aggressive personality, and his lack of obvious panache amounts to an enormous exercise in irony. He always defeats expectations (even in death), and so does the movie. With Jon Voight as the Dublin police inspector who lacks the sense of humor to understand what Cahill is up to. In black-and-white.—*D.D.* (12/21/98) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

GODS AND MONSTERS—In the nineteen-fifties, the British-born director James Whale, who had lent depth and dignity to the horror film with "Frankenstein" and "Bride of Frankenstein," idled away his time, all but forgotten by the movie industry, in Pacific Palisades, California; eventually, he drowned in his pool. Bill Condon's elegant and tactful picture, based on Christopher Bram's novel "Father of Frankenstein," speculates on what might have happened in those final days. The inquiry draws fine performances from Ian McKellen as the dandyish Whale and from Brendan Fraser as his (wholly fictitious) gardener, Clayton Boone, with whom the older man becomes obsessed. With Lynn Redgrave as a Puritan housekeeper.—*Anthony Lane* (11/9/98) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

HENRY IV (1984)—Marcello Mastroianni starred in Marco Bellocchio's handsome, tame adaptation of Pirandello's play about a contemporary Italian aristocrat who either believes or pretends that he's the eleventh-century German emperor Henry IV. Although Bellocchio enlivens the pedestrian first act, he overemphasizes the hero's status as a martyr and an artist figure. To Pirandello, Henry ponders "the misery which is not only his, but everybody's"; the main problem with the movie is that the misery is not everybody's, only Henry's. Still, Mastroianni is always entertaining, and Bellocchio gives him a great climactic moment, as he faces down his would-be saviors behind sunglasses. It's like a variation on a once famous ad campaign: Who's that existentialist behind those Foster Grants? In Italian.—*Michael Sragow* (Walter Reade Theatre; Jan. 6 and Jan. 12.)

LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL—Would that it were. The great, donkey-faced Italian clown Roberto Benigni attempts an ambitious fable of comedy's redemptive power. He plays an Italian Jew who keeps alive his little boy's innocence in a Nazi concentration camp by pretending that the routines of the camp are no more than an intricate game staged for his son's benefit. But Benigni's ironic counter-reality undermines this movie, not the Nazis, who were beyond ridicule for the same reason that they were beyond rationality. Totalitarianism makes the fantastic literal—that is its demonic appeal. Benigni's jokes and games just aren't enough, and you leave the movie thinking that what's touching is not Benigni's ministrations to the little boy but his own need to believe in comedy as salvation. With Giorgio Cantarini, who has the heartbreaking quality of the children in the old neorealist movies, as the boy. In Italian.—*D.D.* (11/16/98) (Angelika Film Center and Paris.)

ERIK T. JOHNSON

THE LOST WEEKEND (1945)—Charles Jackson's novel about a well-brought-up, frustrated, dipsomaniacal writer who goes on a five-day binge that lands him in Bellevue was turned into an unusually daring popular melodrama by the writing team of Charles Brackett (who produced) and Billy Wilder (who directed). As the star, Ray Milland, reprieved from his usual lightweight leading-man roles, surprised the public with his tautness and irony. The picture lacks fluidity, and the slowly paced scenes seem overcalculated, with each colorful character and tense vignette standing out too sharply; everything is nailed down to a meaning for us. The whole thing is short on imaginative resonance; what it has is the Brackett-and-Wilder specialty—a distinctive cruel (and sometimes cruelly funny) edge.—*P.K.* (A Different Light Bookstore; Jan. 10.)

THE PRINCE OF EGYPT—A hefty new animated feature from DreamWorks. The idea is presumably to trump Disney at its own game; the method, more bizarrely, is to trump Cecil B. De Mille at his own game. This is a big, blustery, chest-beating picture; recent successes like "Toy Story" and "Antz" have suggested that the future of animation involves an ironic look at the comic intricacies of life, but this picture, which tells the story of Moses, offers the precise opposite. The few good jokes (most of them courtesy of the Pharaoh's high priests, voiced by Martin Short and Steve Martin) are swallowed up in this humorless epic. The cast is absurdly strong, led by Val Kilmer as Moses, and including Danny Glover, Ralph Fiennes, Jeff Goldblum, Sandra Bullock, Patrick Stewart, and Michelle Pfeiffer. Fiennes and Pfeiffer did their own singing—an act of remarkable bravery, given that the songs are by Stephen Schwartz. If his compositions for "Pocahontas" had you plugging your ears, wait till you hear his new stuff.—*A.L.* (12/28/98 & 1/4/99) (Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Olympia, Orpheum VII, 72nd Street East, State, 34th Street Showplace, and Union Square.)

PRIVATE CONFESSIONS—Liv Ullmann lovingly directs Ingmar Bergman's story, set in 1925, of a woman who, trapped in a stultifying marriage, takes a younger lover. Every detail is exquisitely rendered, from Sven Nykvist's muted yet lustrous camerawork to Pernilla August's demure time bomb of a performance in the central role. Yet one can't help wondering if the theme here—the longing for freedom from fixed social roles—might have felt more revelatory a generation ago. In Swedish.—*Sarah Kerr* (Film Forum; starting Jan. 6.)

SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE—A ripely emotional comedy-fantasia—concocted by director John Madden and screenwriters Marc Norman and Tom Stoppard—of how Shakespeare came to write "Romeo and Juliet." In 1593, young Will (Joseph Fiennes), a stud with liquid eyes and full lips, is just an unhappy and unproductive hack, jealous of the greater Christopher Marlowe (Rupert Everett). At first the movie comes at us too broadly, with many facetiously anachronistic jokes about the grubby professional routines of the theatre. But Will falls in love with the fictional heiress Viola de Lesseps (Gwyneth Paltrow), and when these two poeticizing lovers climb into bed, and Shakespeare's quill begins to fly, the cleverness catches fire and "Shakespeare in Love" turns into an exciting literary-erotic entertainment. With Geoffrey Rush as the theatre manager Henslowe, Ben Affleck as the egotistical actor Ned Alleyn, Colin Firth as Gwyneth Paltrow's surly aristocratic suitor, and Judi Dench, topping her recent Victoria, as a supremely intelligent and wittily dominating Queen Elizabeth.—*D.D.* (12/21/98) (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema II, Cinema 3rd Avenue, and Lincoln Square.)

A SIMPLE PLAN—Sam Raimi's sturdy attempt to do a contemporary, snowbound "Treasure of the Sierra Madre." Three ordinary guys—a married college man who has settled into a routine job (Bill Paxton), his slightly woolly-brained brother (Billy Bob Thornton), and

the town drunk and screwup (Brent Briscoe)—discover \$4.4 million in a downed airplane lodged in the snow. What to do with the cash? The picture becomes a study of the nasty effects of greed and of the weakness of civilization's bonds.—*D.D.* (First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and Village Theatre VII.)

STAR TREK: INSURRECTION—Paramount's most lucrative long-running franchise (nine films in nineteen years) shows little wear and tear in this installment, perhaps the most colorful and relaxed of the series. In this story, the stalwart Captain Picard (Patrick Stewart) leads his multicultural starship crew in a rebellion to save a planet from the very Federation they serve so proudly. Director Jonathan Frakes (he plays Commander Riker) films much of the movie in the beautiful High Sierras, and the dramatic landscape grounds the action—it's a welcome relief from photon torpedoes detonating in space. "Insurrection" is a decidedly less bombastic entry in the series, and it works as a prelude to the likely fireworks of the next installment—the first "Star Trek" feature of the new millennium.—*Bruce Diones* (Coronet Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, 19th Street East 6, Olympia, Orpheum VII, State, 34th Street Showplace, and Village Theatre VII.)

STEPHOM—A wealthy lawyer (Ed Harris) leaves his wife (Susan Sarandon) for a young photographer (Julia Roberts). Needless to say, his kids (Jena Malone and Liam Aiken) don't like the idea: they resent the presence of the interloper, who spends the rest of the movie trying to win them over. Just to complicate the issue, the wife learns that she has terminal cancer. It all adds up to a new and curious phase in the career of director Chris Columbus. He began by writing comedies, and graduated (or sank) to movies like "Mrs. Doubtfire," which surrounded the jokes with mush. Now the mush has taken over, and Columbus has slowed his pace in nervous

deference to the solemnity of his plot (not to mention the opulence of his characters' lives). This does nobody any favors—particularly not actors as skilled as Sarandon and Harris, who do their best with a script that is itself incurable. Poor Julia Roberts is forced to indicate her photographic prowess by announcing "It's a wrap" at regular intervals; it's that kind of movie.—*A.L.* (12/28/98 & 1/4/99) (Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE THIN RED LINE—Terrence Malick's first film in twenty years is about a company of American troops at Guadalcanal. What happens, in essence, is that they come ashore and take an enemy-held hill; somehow, Malick, who was never a man to be hurried, spins this simple action out to nearly three hours. There is a dreamy prologue, in which a couple of soldiers go AWOL among contented villagers, briefly tasting a paradise that will soon be lost in war; there are repeated, lingering shots of local birds and beasts looking ready for trouble; and, above all, there is an unresolved confusion as to what, and whom, the movie should be about. The cast includes Nick Nolte, Sean Penn, Elias Koteas, John Savage, Woody Harrelson, George Clooney, and John Travolta, with strong performances from younger actors like Ben Chaplin and Jim Caviezel, but they all drift in and out of the action, never staying long enough to hold center stage. Malick seems to like his characters lonely—they talk to themselves in voice-over but rarely connect with other men. The result is a ravishingly strange mess: part bloody action movie, part pantheistic trip.—*A.L.* (12/28/98 & 1/4/99) (Union Square and Ziegfeld.)

TOO BAD SHE'S BAD (1955)—Alberto Moravia's divertimento on the cops-and-robbers theme features a prodigious family of thieves—father Vittorio De Sica is a digni-



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fied and accomplished pickpocket, his big pussycat daughter Sophia Loren is a happy delinquent who can't understand people who work for a living, and his two little sons can strip an automobile in thirty seconds flat. As several critics pointed out, this comedy has only one drawback: when the magnificent Sophia sails across the screen, one forgets to read the subtitles. With Marcello Mastroianni. Directed by Alessandro Blasetti. In Italian.—P.K. (Walter Reade Theatre; Jan. 6-7 and Jan. 12.)

WAKING NED DEVINE—This picture is essentially a "very special episode" of the BBC TV show "Ballykissangel." There may be no official connection to the series, but fans will recognize actors, character types, a major plot device, even the name of the local pub as common to both enterprises. This is not a bad thing, since the actors are fine, the characters endearing, the plot funny, and the pub appropriately raucous and melodious; it's just not terribly energizing. Kirk Jones wrote and directed this tribute to the Irish spirit, which he sees as composed of equal parts avarice and poetry. Filmed on the Isle of Man.—Ken Marks (Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.)

YOU'VE GOT MAIL—A regrouping of the team that brought you "Sleepless in Seattle": director Nora Ephron and leading players Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan. Once again, the story hinges on a couple who know each other for real only in the final minute—in this case, Joe Fox, who owns a chain of large bookstores, and Kathleen Kelly, who runs one small bookstore and finds herself put out of business. They meet and dislike each other without realizing that they've been waging a little light flirtation, under appropriate pseudonyms, via E-mail. The movie is sweetly undemanding, as you might expect, but the romantic suspense is zilch, and, compared with Ernst Lubitsch's "The Shop Around the Corner," on which Ephron based her script, everything feels spineless and slack. Hanks is badly underused, and it's left to the wonderful Steve Zahn (last seen in "Out of Sight"), as an employee in the small shop, to wring a little comic juice from the proceedings. The strangest performance, however, comes from the Upper West Side, which plays a neighborhood of uncomplicated bliss: gardens in bloom, happy street markets, an endless supply of literate conversationalists. Dream on, sister.—A.L. (12/28/98 & 1/4/99) (Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

ALSO PLAYING

A CIVIL ACTION: Guild and Lincoln Square.... **DOWN IN THE DELTA:** BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, East 85th Street, 62nd & Broadway, and Village East Cinemas.... **THE FACULTY:** Astor Plaza, Chelsea West, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Orpheum VII, Waverly, and Union Square.... **HILARY & JACKIE:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Union Square.... **THE HI-LO COUNTRY:** 19th Street East 6 and 64th and 2nd.... **HURLYBURLY:** Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, and Lincoln Square.... **LITTLE VOICE:** Gotham Cinema, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Union Square.... **MIGHTY JOE YOUNG:** Chelsea West, Criterion Center, Cinema I, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.... **PATCH ADAMS:** Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Metro Cinema, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 34th Street Showplace, Union Square, and Waverly.... **SAVING PRIVATE RYAN** (8/3/98): Union Square.... **THE SWINDLE:** BAM Rose Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Quad Cinema.... **THE THEORY OF FLIGHT:** Beekman, Regency, and Village East Cinemas.

IREVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

FILM FORUM 2 AND 3, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—**THEATRE 2:** Through Jan. 7: "Kiss Me Deadly" (1955, Robert Aldrich)... From Jan. 8: "It Happened Here" (1963, Kevin Brownlow) and "Winstanley" (1975, Brownlow)... **THEATRE 3:** "Touch of Evil" (1958, Orson Welles).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—A program of films from Brazil; all in Portuguese, with English subtitles. Jan. 7 at 2:30: "Little Book of Love" (1996, Sandra Werneck)... Jan. 7 at 6: "Copacabana Fools Me" (1968, Antônio Carlos da Fontoura)... Jan. 8 at 2:30: "Miramar" (1997, Júlio Bressane)... Jan. 8 at 6: "O Anjo Nasceu" (1969, Bressane)... Jan. 8 at 8: "Macunaíma" (1969, Joaquim Pedro de Andrade)... Jan. 9 at 2: "Dona Flor and Her Two Husbands" (1976, Bruno Barreto)... Jan. 9 at 5: "Barren Lives" (1963, Nelson Pereira dos Santos)... Jan. 10 at 2: "O Quatrilha" (1995, Fábio Barreto)... Jan. 10 at 5: "The Time and Hour of Augusto Matraga" (1966, Roberto Santos)... Jan. 11 at 2:30: "Iracema" (1975, Jorge Bodansky and Orlando Senna)... Jan. 11 at 6: "Landscapes of Memory" (1996, José Araújo)... Jan. 12 at 2:30: "Memories of Helen" (1969, David Neves)... Jan. 12 at 6: "Alma Corsaria" (1993, Carlos Reichen-

"Chronicle of Poor Lovers" (1954, Carlo Lizzani)... Jan. 11 at 2 and 6:15: "Ghosts of Rome" (1961, Antonio Pietrangeli)... Jan. 11 at 4 and 8:20: "Family Diary" (1963, Valerio Zurlini)... Jan. 7 at 6:30: "Jerome" (1998, Thomas Johnston, David Elton, and Eric Tignini)... Jan. 9-10 at 2: "Nep-tune's Daughter" (1949, Edward Buzzell). **AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE**, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—A program of films written or directed by Paul Schrader. Jan. 9 at 2: "Taxi Driver" (1976, Martin Scorsese)... Jan. 9 at 4:30: "The Last Temptation of Christ" (1988, Scorsese)... Jan. 10 at 2: "Affliction" (†)... Jan. 10 at 5:30: "Blue Collar" (†).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Jan. 12 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "Rendezvous in Paris" (1995, Eric Rohmer; in French).

A DIFFERENT LIGHT BOOKSTORE, 151 W. 19th St.—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). On Jan. 10 at 7, the feature will be "The Lost Weekend" (†).

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3587)—A program of French films, 1958-98; in French, with English subtitles. Jan. 6 at 2:30 and Jan. 8 at 7:30: "L'État des Lieux" (1992, Jean-François Richet)... Jan. 6 at 6 and Jan. 9 at 2:30: "Numéro Deux" (1975, Jean-Luc Godard and Anne-Marie Miéville)... Jan. 8 at 2:30 and Jan. 9 at 7:30: "A Nos Amours" (1983, Maurice Pialat).

THEATRE ADDRESSES

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ASTOR PLAZA, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM ROSE CINEMAS, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn. 718-623-2770.
BECKMAN, Second Ave. at 66th St.
CHELSEA CINEMAS, 260 W. 23rd St.
CHELSEA WEST, 333 W. 23rd St.
CINEMA I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
CINEMA II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
CINEMA 3RD AVENUE, Third Ave. at 60th St.
CINEMA VILLAGE, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
CORONET CINEMAS, Third Ave. at 59th St.
CRITERION CENTER, Broadway at 44th St.
EAST 85TH STREET, First Ave. at 85th St.
EASTSIDE PLAYHOUSE, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84TH STREET SIXPLEX, Broadway at 84th St.
86TH STREET EAST TWIN, Third Ave. at 86th St.
EMBASSY I, 2, AND 3, Seventh Ave. at 47th St.
59TH STREET EAST CINEMA, 239 E. 59th St.
FILM FORUM, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
FIRST & 62ND CINEMAS, 400 E. 62nd St.
GOHAM CINEMA, Third Ave. at 58th St.
GUILD, 33 W. 50th St.
LINCOLN PLAZA CINEMAS, Broadway at 63rd St.
LINCOLN SQUARE, Broadway at 68th St.
METRO CINEMA I AND 2, Broadway at 99th St.
MURRAY HILL CINEMAS, 160 E. 34th St.
NEW YORK TWIN, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19TH STREET EAST 6, Broadway at 19th St.
OLYMPIA I AND II, Broadway at 107th St.
ORPHEUM VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
PARIS, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
PARK & 86TH STREET CINEMAS, 125 E. 86th St.
QUAD CINEMA, 34 W. 13th St.
REGENCY, Broadway at 67th St.
THE SCREENING ROOM, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
62ND & BROADWAY, 62 W. 62nd St.
64TH AND 2ND, Second Ave. at 64th St.
72ND STREET EAST, Third Ave. at 71st St.
STATE, Broadway at 45th St.
SUTTON I AND 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34TH STREET SHOWPLACE, 238 E. 34th St.
UNION SQUARE, Broadway at 13th St.
VILLAGE EAST CINEMAS, Second Ave. at 12th St.
VILLAGE THEATRE VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
WAVELY I AND 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
WORLDWIDE CINEMAS, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
ZIEGFELD, 141 W. 54th St.



At MOMA, a program of short films from the Lodz Film School in Poland.

bach)... Jan. 8 at 6 and 8; Jan. 9 at 1, 3, and 5; and Jan. 10 at 1 and 3: Several different programs of short films made at the Lodz Film School in Poland.

WALTER READE THEATRE, Lincoln Center (875-5600)—A program of films starring Marcello Mastroianni; most in Italian, with English subtitles. Jan. 6 at 2, Jan. 7 at 4, and Jan. 12 at 6:15: "Too Bad She's Bad" (†)... Jan. 6 at 4 and Jan. 12 at 8:15: "Henry IV" (†)... Jan. 7 at 2 and Jan. 9 at 8:45: "Leo the Last" (1970, John Boorman; in English)... Jan. 7 at 9: "Dark Eyes" (1987, Nikita Mikhalkov)... Jan. 8 at 2 and 6:45 and Jan. 9 at 6: "8½" (1963, Federico Fellini)... Jan. 8 at 4:35 and 9:20: "White Nights" (1957, Luchino Visconti)... Jan. 9 at 4 and Jan. 12 at 4:15: "What Time Is It?" (1989, Ettore Scola)... Jan. 10 at 4 and 8:40: "The Beekeeper" (1986, Theo Angelopoulos)... Jan. 10 at 6:20 and Jan. 12 at 2:

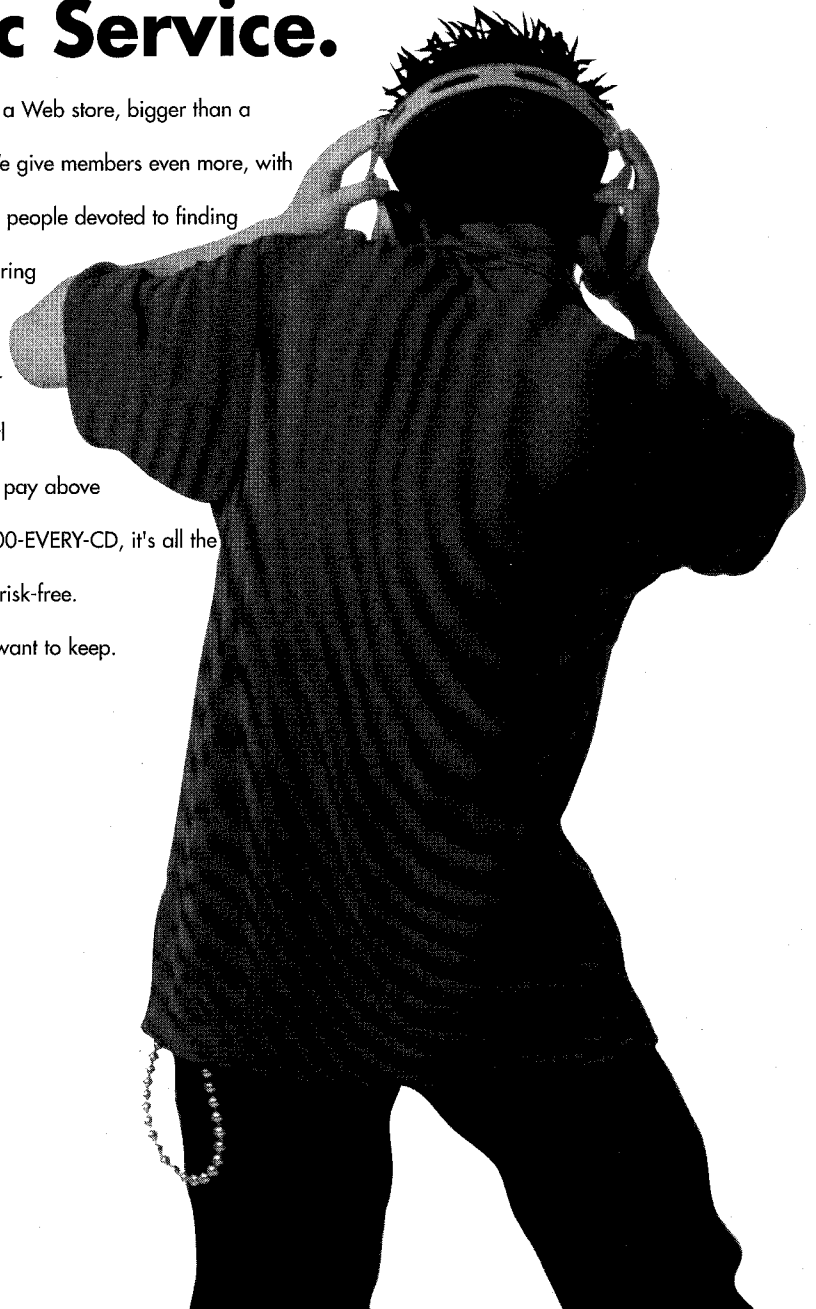
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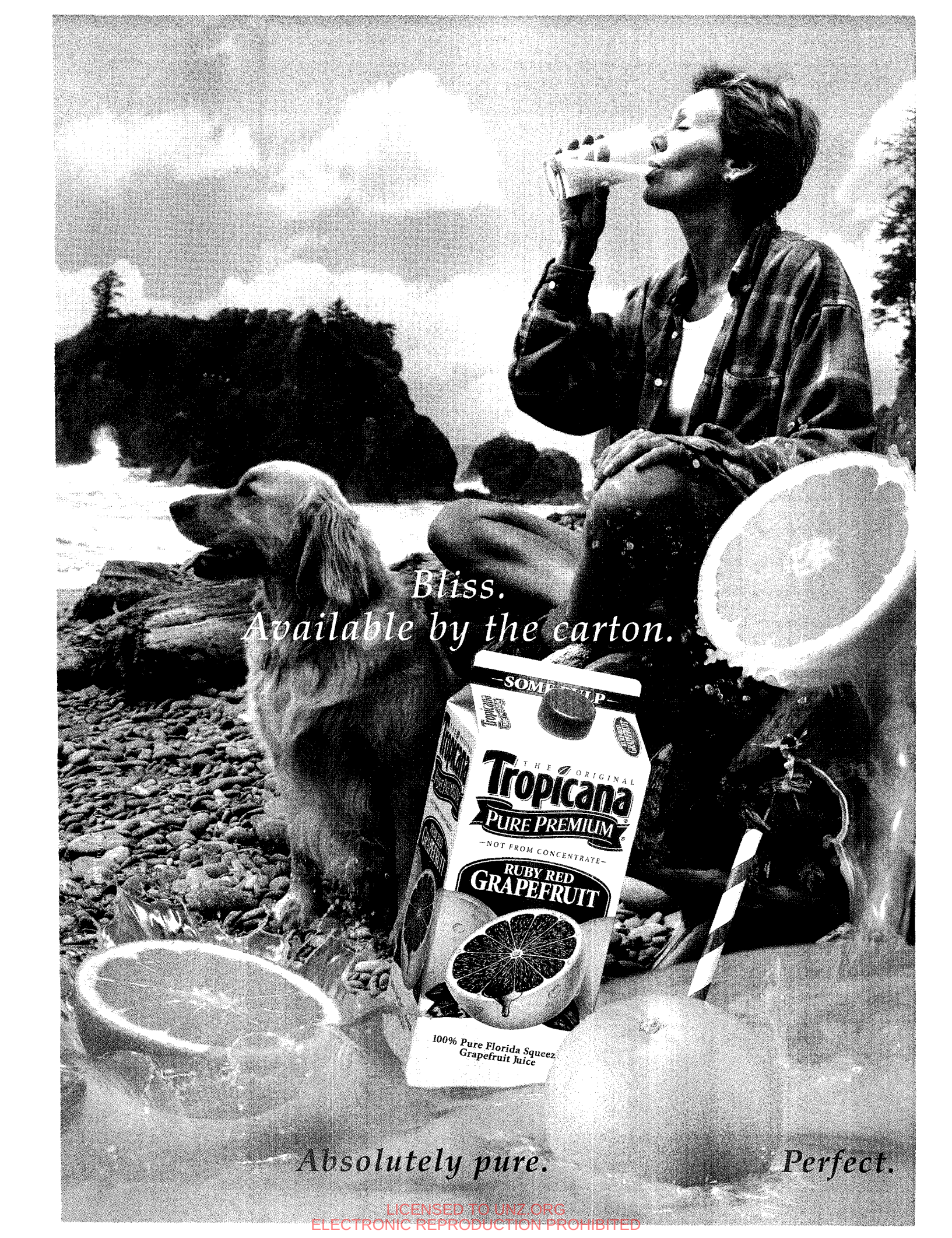


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THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT

Science and the perils of a parable.

 IN the movie "A Civil Action," the families of eight leukemia victims accuse two major corporations of contaminating the drinking water of Woburn, Massachusetts. John Travolta's portrayal of the lawyer who argues their case has been justifiably praised by critics for its subtlety: he is neither a villain nor a hero but an uncomfortable and ambiguous combination of the two—a man of equal parts greed and idealism who is in the grip of a powerful obsession. Curiously, though, when it comes to the scientific premise of the story, "A Civil Action" (like Jonathan Harr's best-seller, on which it is based) permits no ambiguity at all. It is taken as a given that the chemical allegedly dumped, trichloroethylene (TCE), is a human carcinogen—even though, in point of fact, TCE is only a probable human carcinogen: tests have been made on animals, but no human-based data have tied it to cancer. It is also taken as a given that the particular carcinogenic properties of TCE were what resulted in the town's leukemia outbreak, even though the particular causes and origins of that form of cancer remain mysterious. The best that can be said is that there might be a link between TCE and disease. But the difference between what "might be" and what "is"—which in scientific circles is all the difference in the

world—does not appear to amount to much among the rest of us. We know that human character can be complex and ambiguous. But we want science to conform to a special kind of narrative simplicity: to begin from obvious premises and proceed, tidily and expeditiously, to morally satisfying conclusions.

Consider the strange saga of silicone breast implants. Almost seven years ago, the Food and Drug Administration placed a moratorium on most uses of silicone implants, because the devices had been inadequately tested and the agency wanted to give researchers time to gather new data on their safety. Certain that the data would indict implants in the end, personal-injury lawyers rounded up hundreds of thousands of women in a massive class-action suit. By 1994, four manufacturers of implants had been instructed to pay out the largest class-action settlement in history: \$4.25 billion. And when that amount proved insufficient for all the plaintiffs, the largest of the

defendants—Dow Corning—filed for Chapter 11, offering \$3.2 billion last November to settle its part of the suit.

Now, however, we actually have the evidence on implant safety. More than twenty studies have been completed, by institutions ranging from Harvard Medical School to the Mayo Clinic. The governments of Germany, Australia, and Britain have convened scientific panels. The American College of Rheumatology, the American Academy of Neurology, and the Council on Scientific Affairs of the American Medical Association have published reviews of the evidence, and last month, in a long-awaited decision, an independent scientific panel, appointed by a federal court, released its findings. All of the groups have reached the same conclusion: there is little or no reason to believe that breast implants cause disease of any kind. The author of the toxicological section of the federal court's panel concluded, "There is no evidence that silicone breast implants precipitate novel immune responses or induce systemic inflammation," and the author of the immunology section of the same report stated, "Women with silicone breast implants do not display a silicone-induced systemic abnormality in the types or functions of cells of the immune system."

There is some sense now that with the unequivocal conclusions of the December report, the tide against implants may finally be turning. But that is small consolation. For almost seven years, at a cost of billions and in the face of some twenty-odd studies to the contrary, the courts



and the public clung to a conclusion with no particular merit other than that it sounded as if it might be true. Here, after all, was a group of profit-driven multinationals putting gooey, leaky, and largely untested patties of silicone into the chests of a million American women. In the narrative we have imposed on science, that act ought to have consequences, just as the contamination of groundwater by a profit-seeking multinational ought to cause leukemia. Our moral sense said so, and, apparently, that was enough. Of course, if science always made moral sense we would not need scientists. We could staff our laboratories with clergy.

It may be hard to shed a tear for implant manufacturers like Dow Corning, even though their shareholders have been royally ransomed for no good reason. Those who sell drugs and medical devices must expect to be held hostage, from time to time, by the irrationalities of the legal system. The million women in this country with breast implants do, however, deserve our compassion. They chose cosmetic surgery in order to feel better about themselves. For this, they were first accused of an unnatural vanity and then warned that they had placed themselves in physical peril, and the first charge informed the second until the imagined threat of

silicone implants took on the force of moral judgment: they asked for it, these women. They should have been satisfied with what God gave them and stayed home to reread "The Beauty Myth." Well, they didn't ask for anything, and what they did with their bodies turns out to have no larger meaning at all. Science, tempting though it is to believe otherwise, is not in the business of punishing the politically retrograde, nor is it a means of serving retribution to the wicked and the irresponsible. In the end, one may find that the true health toll of breast implants was the seven years of needless anxiety suffered by implant wearers at the hands of all those lawyers and health "advocates" who were ostensibly acting on their behalf.

—MALCOLM GLADWELL

LEGACIES

Jackson Pollock finally goes postal.



OF all the Abstract Expressionists, Jackson Pollock was the one who smoked the most. In photographs, he often appears as a brooding presence in a denim jacket, a cigarette dangling from his mouth. Yet soon we will be seeing a new Pollock; namely, Pollock the ex-smoker, the artist who kicked the habit without even using a nicotine patch. The United States Postal Service plans to observe Pollock's birthday, on January 28th, by unveiling a thirty-three-cent stamp based on a celebrated photograph of him—minus the Camel. Pollock is hardly the first person to have his cigarettes confiscated by the post office, a practice that began in 1994, when a stamp honoring Robert Johnson showed the blues legend strumming his guitar in a suspiciously smoke-free environment.

Even in his new health-conscious incarnation, Pollock might seem like a surprising choice for philatelic fame. Unlike such other stamp subjects as Neil Armstrong, Bugs Bunny, and Martha Washington, he did all the things that upstanding citizens are expected to resist. He drank like a fish,

mingled with Communists, and habitually exceeded the speed limit. Worse yet, he saw a shrink and used the word "damn" as if it were a comma. And once, when he was angry, he even kicked a dog.

On the other hand, if there's anything America loves more than a hero, it's an antihero, which helps to explain why the new stamp doesn't feature a reproduction of "Autumn Rhythm," "Lavender Mist," or some other Pollock masterwork but, rather, a one-inch-square likeness of the man himself. He's the first artist since Norman Rockwell to have his face on a stamp, and together they define the two sides of American life—the yearning for front-porch security on the one hand and for emotional adventure on the other.

The new stamp pales beside the

Alexander Calder stamps issued last year, a tour de force of elegant design in which five of the sculptor's mobiles and stabiles float on a chaste white ground. By contrast, the Pollock stamp, which is based on a photograph that appeared in *Life* in 1949, would no doubt pass muster in Hollywood. It's an action shot in miniature, showing the artist crouched above one of his canvases, a can of paint in one hand, a stick dripping with pigment in the other. Clad in the requisite denim, he seems to be saying, "Real artists don't wear smocks."

The idea of a Pollock stamp has been under discussion since 1993, when the Pollock-Krasner House and Study Center, in East Hampton, New York, nominated the artist as a subject. As difficult as it may be to land a retrospective at MOMA, where Pollock's work is currently on view, getting on a stamp is infinitely harder, and for a while no one was sure whether Pollock would make the cut. The postal service receives about fifty thousand suggestions a year for new stamps, though not all the ideas are equally viable. As Don Smeraldi, a spokesman for the post office, recently told me, "We've had people suggest a hamburger stamp, in honor of the great American hamburger. There's also been a request for a beer stamp that would taste like a pretzel when you lick it." Beer—now that's an idea that Pollock himself might have endorsed. —DEBORAH SOLOMON

TABLE TALK

New Yorkers battle over a homely nosh.



WHEN someone asks the rhetorical question "What am I, chopped liver?," it clearly means that he's being made to feel irrelevant. Given this, you'd think that the Chopped Liver Wars would not have lasted more than twenty minutes, but in certain Manhattan circles this gustatory pilpul has been raging for months. It all began in August, when Ron Rosenbaum wrote a column in the *New York Observer* declaring his love for the chopped liver sold at Barney Greengrass, calling it "a supreme achievement of Jewish American civilization." A few weeks later, Gael Greene countered in

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTEL

New York, suggesting that Greengrass's "woebegone" version of the foodstuff in question was eminently skippable. (Greene happens to be right; the Greengrass chopped liver not only has "blindingly big chunks of egg white," as she put it, but unregenerate globs of schmaltz.) The dispute might have ended there, but when you're dealing with an acute case of ethnic nostalgia—well, suffice it to say that the bickering has continued through the holiday season.

Why all the fuss? A worldly friend noted that he is indifferent to chopped liver, adding that "all Gentiles are indifferent to chopped liver." There is another group, however, that is equally indifferent to it: observant Jews. For them, Jewishness is serious stuff—how kosher is kosher enough?—not a point of departure for a snappy cultural exchange between a foodie and an anti-foodie. It seems that the further you've moved from your origins the more you look back in hunger.

It's impossible to rate all the chopped livers that Greene listed in response to Rosenbaum's challenge that she name five places that make the dish better than Greengrass does. (She recommended Zabar's, and the Stage, Second Avenue, Carnegie, and Katz's Delicatessens.) But in fact, if I may presume, the best chopped liver in the city comes from Fischer Brothers, a kosher butcher on West Seventy-second Street. Fischer offers two kinds of liver—chicken (which I prefer) and beef (closer to the texture of pâté but with a slightly acrid undertone)—and it's hard to distinguish between theirs and the kind, crunchy with celery, that used to be made by loving hands at home. It's also tempting to recommend Park East, a kosher butcher on the Upper East Side, which offers a creamy, uneggy variety that fluctuates in quality but is good at its best. Then again, an infidel (with taste) could find happiness with the chopped liver sold at the branch of Glendale Bakery that's located at Eighty-seventh and Lexington. There's also Sammy's Roumanian Restaurant, on the Lower East Side, where the liver is prepared tableside, like the guacamole at Rosa Mexicana.

It's a bit of a show, but if the thought of looking on as a waiter pours a syrup pitcher filled with liquefied chicken fat into a bowl of liver, radishes, greens, schmaltz, and onions makes you ill you'd better skip it.

So let Rosenbaum and Greene fling insults at each other in their struggle to reign as the ultimate authority on Jewish food. ("When it comes to chopped liver, Gael, I won't call you a putzhead, but I will say you've lost your *yiddishe kop*.") When all is said and done, their argument about a culinary simulacrum of a long-ago taste would fly better in the Borscht Belt than in a kosher kitchen. —DAPHNE MERKIN



LOST AND FOUND DEPT.

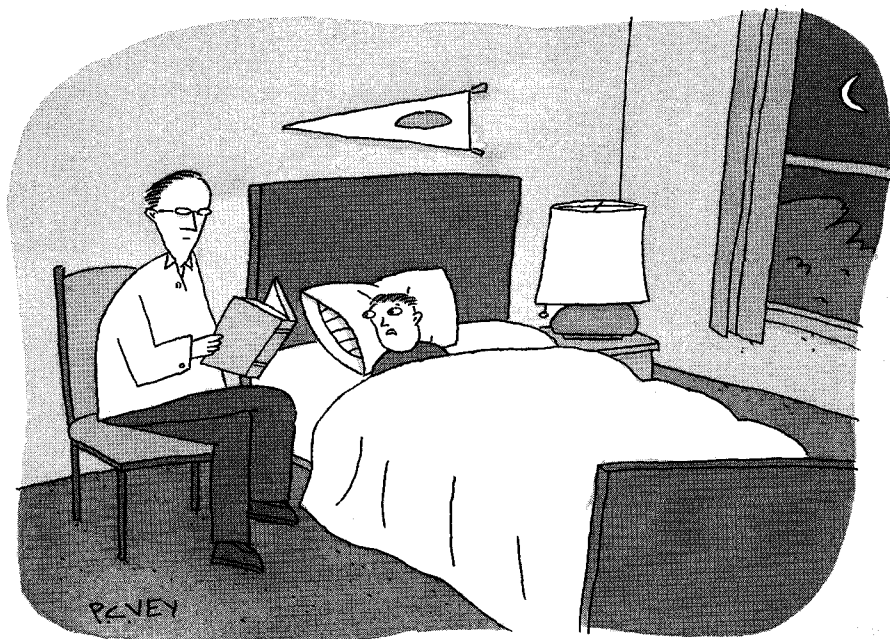
Attention, swingers: Rare home movies of the Rat Pack resurface.



Over the last fifteen years or so, the whiskey-fumed, broad-chasing Rat Pack—Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Sammy Davis, Jr., Peter Lawford, and Joey Bishop—has become ever more fascinating to members of the late- and post-baby-boom generations. The appre-

ciation is partly ironic, partly genuine, and partly the result of the unending cycle of coolness. ("You see, Simba, the hippies feed on the squares, yet the squares return later as Tony Bennett on MTV.") For most of these fans, the height of Rat Packiana is "Ocean's Eleven," a 1960 caper film set in Las Vegas, which starred all five members. However, their apotheosis actually occurred when they appeared together at the Sands casino each night for a month during the movie's filming. These legendary performances, known as the Meeting at the Summit, were thought to survive only in the memories of those who were there, but now long-lost film has been found, allowing everyone to see the real thing. David Wild, a writer who recently lectured at the Sintra conference held at Hofstra University, told me he considers the recovered footage to be "vaguely Rosetta stone-ish," referring to it as "the Holy Grail." "The Sands shows were it," he said. "That was Woodstock in a tuxedo."

Carole Langer, a television producer, discovered the footage last year while preparing "The Rat Pack," a four-hour "Biography" special that airs on A&E this week. She told me, "I said to myself, I can't do this show if you can't see the Rat Pack and hear them." Since all five members appeared together only rarely, Langer seemed to be faced with an impossible task. True, a remarkable tape of a concert that Sinatra, Martin, and Davis gave in 1965 had recently reemerged (it was



"Shouldn't you be reading that to me out loud or something?"



broadcast on Nickelodeon last April), but, as Langer said, there is a certain snobbism among Rat Pack aficionados, and it only really counts if you have seen the Five.

"Through the grapevine, I heard that there was some sort of tape at the Las Vegas News Bureau," Langer said. "It turns out they'd sent a guy named Jerry Abbott to the Sands in 1960 to film the performances. He didn't even know how to use the camera, but he was there every night!" Abbott shot three and a half hours of 16-mm. film, which over the years was transferred and retransferred to three-quarter-inch videotape. When Langer viewed this tape at the news bureau, she was disappointed. "The quality was horrible," she said. "The boys seemed to be underwater, and you couldn't hear anything." She asked where the originals were, and was told they had been gone for years. A week or two later, however, after Langer had interviewed Abbott for the special and had got to know him better, the sixty-seven-year-old cameraman called her on the telephone in New York. "He told me, 'O.K., I think I know where I can put my hands on the stuff,'" Langer recalled. "So I met him in Las Vegas, and there he was with these 16-mm. reels in shopping bags." A couple of nights after she returned from their meeting, Langer called Abbott to thank him and learned that he had died in his sleep.

Painstakingly restored by Langer, the films are a record of vaudeville meets *Playboy*. Onstage together most of the time, the boys mock one another's singing, take their pants off, introduce people in the crowd—Martin's bookie, for example, and Senator John F. Kennedy—and repeatedly return to a full bar set up behind them. "Have that ready by three o'clock, Doctor," Bishop says to Sinatra. Mixing a drink, Sinatra makes a typical crack when he drops some ice: "Let me see Sonja Henie do something on that." It's interesting to compare these fraternal antics with those of the cleverer and more puppyish Beatles. When they appeared, only a couple of years later, jokes about booze and broads were unthinkable. Watching the full Rat Pack at the Sands, you get a glimpse of show business at its most highly stoked, just before everything changed. —JAMES COLLINS

DEPT. OF HANDLERS

Mike Tyson's new guardian angel.



SHELLY FINKEL, manager of prizefighters, was in town recently to see his wife and children. He was between visits to Phoenix, Arizona, where the former heavyweight champion Mike

Tyson is in training, and where Finkel has spent the summer and fall helping to ease the boxer back into the ring: Tyson's January 16th fight against François Botha will be his first since June of 1997, when he bit Evander Holyfield's ears, lost his license, and appeared, at last, to be finished. Until recently, Finkel had acted as Tyson's second for no fee, only the possibility of a percentage from a potential Tyson payday.

Tyson, who is currently suing his former manager Don King for a hundred million dollars, no longer likes the term "manager." He and Finkel have instead agreed that Finkel will be his "adviser." They have yet to sign a contractual arrangement. But Finkel is not concerned that Tyson might walk away. "I trust him, because everything he has told me he would do he has done," Finkel said.

Finkel, who is fifty-four, pillowy, and most often wears jeans and running shoes, is well regarded by the fight crowd for displaying a humanity rarely seen in the industry. He used an advance paid to Mark Breland, a former welterweight champion he managed, to establish a lifetime annuity for the boxer. He is also known for counselling his fighters to quit before their brains are too badly rattled—as he did in the case of Holyfield, who did not listen and went on to defeat Tyson twice.

Finkel is famously patient: time and again he has stuck around, helped out, asking little and picking up the check. It has not always gone well. His dance with the welterweight champion Oscar De La Hoya during the early nineties included paying for De La Hoya's mother's chemotherapy, and, later, for her funeral. De La Hoya went on to sign with other management after the 1992 Olympics, and eventually reimbursed Finkel.

Finkel told me that he first met Tyson in 1982, when the fighter was still a stocky teen-ager with possibilities. He and Tyson saw each other from time to time, even as Don King ingratiated himself after the death of Tyson's first manager, Jim Jacobs, in 1988. Finkel said that he and Tyson "stayed friendly" through the boxer's descent—his loss of the championship to James (Buster) Douglas, in 1990, his conviction and imprisonment for rape, in 1992. Shortly before Tyson was released from prison, in 1995, Finkel sent him a letter. "I wrote

how I could help him," he told me. "I made a hundred million dollars for Evander Holyfield. I said, 'Imagine what you and I could do.'"

Tyson, however, returned to King, lost twice to Holyfield, and by mid-1998 found himself thirteen million dollars in debt to the Internal Revenue Service. With his license revoked, Tyson had no income, except what he earned from a demeaning turn as a referee in a professional wrestling match last March.

Finkel called again, and this time Tyson called back. Finkel assumed stewardship of a man so universally regarded as damaged goods that he had become the butt of rabies jokes. He assured Tyson that the boxer's struggle for redemption had not gone unnoticed.

"You really think I'm strong?" Finkel recalled Tyson's asking him.

"I think you're strong," Finkel reassured him.

Where Finkel found chaos, he imposed order. "Mike needs structure in his life," he said. "He was told he could do whatever he wanted because he was Mike Tyson. I try to narrow down the choices for him, and then it's his decision." When it came time to hire a new trainer, for instance, Finkel presented Tyson with three names. Tyson chose Tommy Brooks, who had assisted in training Holyfield.

Still, things are not always so smooth. In September, the Nevada State Athletic Commission demanded that Tyson undergo a psychiatric evaluation before it would consider restoring his license. Tyson, Finkel said, felt "humiliated" by the testing, which took place at Massachusetts General Hospital, and at one point walked out.

"I can't let you go," Finkel told him in the hospital corridor.

"I'm going to Brooklyn," Tyson said.

"You've got to go back in there," Finkel said.

The fighter relented. The psychiatrists found him depressed but unlikely to go berserk again in the ring.

Later, Finkel said, a calmer Tyson told him, "I know I wanted you to tell me to go back in." —MICHAEL SHAPIRO

O PIONEERS! DEPT.

Floating limousine liberals play shuffleboard.



WHEN Victor Navasky and a group of partners first took over *The Nation* and its accompanying debts twenty years ago, the bearded scholar of McCarthyism says, two prospects would have been "utterly unthinkable": "The first was that the Soviet Union would become 'the former Soviet Union' in my lifetime, and the second was that *The Nation* would ever sponsor a Caribbean cruise." That was then. Nowadays, of course, a magazine without a cruise is like a Muscovite without a stockbroker.

"Welcome to the first-ever luxury cruise of the vanguard of the proletariat," Molly Ivins, the Texas columnist, announced to the three hundred and seventy-five passengers aboard Holland America's M. S. Veendam as *The Nation's* maiden Caribbean cruise steered toward St. Thomas last month. The trip had sold out almost immediately, at prices ranging from \$1,824 to \$2,936 per person. The most successful commercial venture in the magazine's hundred and thirty-three years of existence, the cruise also provided a lesson in the pleasures of cognitive dissonance.

Uniquely, perhaps, in the history of Holland America Lines, passengers started the trip by complaining about the champagne, fresh flowers, and fruit baskets provided in every stateroom. "Is that really necessary?" an elderly California woman asked. One Charlottesville man buttonholed Navasky to carp that no time was being set aside to raise money for the magazine itself, which runs at a deficit. "There are a lot of pockets to pick here," he advised.

The sun shone brilliantly, and the azure waves shimmered on cue, but many of *The Nation's* passengers hardly seemed to notice that they were on a boat, much less in a region renowned for its relaxation-inducing powers. When

one scheduled speaker missed her plane and was unable to rendezvous with the ship at St. Thomas for a planned seminar on labor and the environment, fifty-six passengers decided to address the problem. Instead of going to the beach, they stayed on board and organized themselves into five working groups, appointing one passenger, a public-health physician from California, to bring the issue of the cancelled seminar to the *Nation* authorities. The result was an emergency session on labor and the environment, nicknamed the "mutiny seminar." Following this assembly, passengers put together other ad-hoc seminars, including one that convened at seven on Saturday morning to discuss how to create a "culture of peace" for the next century.

The prearranged panel discussions were surprisingly tame, given that the panels were largely made up of *Nation* writers, many of whom were suffering from what the guest moderator Calvin Trillin termed the "pinko flu." The audience, however, showed a bit more feistiness. Against the background of the House Judiciary Committee's impeachment hearings, which were piped in on CNN, one speaker found himself being chastised by a female audience member for using the word "emasculated" to refer to President Clinton's 1998 political agenda. "I am concerned not only about the gender makeup of the panels but also by the use of language by this panel which reflects its gender bias," she explained. Another audience member prefaced his comments by announcing that his first vote had been cast for Earl Browder, the Communist candidate who opposed Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1936. Yet another audience member complained that too many of the speakers were demonstrating a dangerous "softness toward Al Gore."

A cruise consultant who had helped set up the trip was taken aback by the ambience. "I've never seen a cruise audience be so ornery to its guest speakers," he confided to me by the Stairmasters, adding, "and it's not only the New Yorkers, either." He was grateful, though, that no one tried to unionize the crew's largely Indonesian wait staff. In any case, this voyage had proved to be such a success that he was already assisting Navasky in planning the magazine's next cruise: an Alaskan trip featuring a bonus excursion to the site of the Exxon Valdez spill. —ERIC ALTERMAN



Mike Tyson & Shelly Finkel

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How will the Chief Justice preside over the trial of the President?

BY JEFFREY ROSEN

WHEN the impeachment trial of Bill Clinton begins in the Senate, the Constitution requires the Chief Justice, William Rehnquist, to preside. If Rehnquist is dressed as usual, he will be wearing a black robe with three gold stripes on each sleeve—an odd bit of comic-opera frippery which he designed in 1995, inspired by the Lord Chancellor's costume in a local production of "Iolanthe." (The Chief Justice might want to choose something less frisky, under the circumstances, since Gilbert and Sullivan's "highly susceptible Chancellor" is a lecherous character who has a weakness for his nineteen-year-old wards.) As Rehnquist swears to do "impartial justice" in a trial that will focus on the question of Presidential perjury, and then administers the same oath to all one hundred United States senators, empanelling them as jurors in this extraordinary proceeding, he will certainly be mindful of historical precedent. He has, after all, published a fine book on the nineteenth-century impeachment trials of Justice Samuel Chase and President Andrew Johnson. But the Chief Justice may also be reminded of a more recent drama in the Senate: his confirmation hearings in 1986, when he, too, was suspected of lying under oath.

Rehnquist was nominated to the Supreme Court in 1971. After he testified in his first confirmation hearings, a memo surfaced that Rehnquist had written as a law clerk to Justice Robert Jackson in 1952, the year when the Supreme Court began considering arguments in *Brown v. Board of Education*. In the memo, which he called "A Random Thought on the Segregation Cases," Rehnquist wrote that the Court should not be moved by moral or social concerns. "In the long run it is the majority who will determine what the constitutional rights of the minority are," he declared. "I realize that it is an unpopular and unhumanitarian position,

for which I have been excoriated by 'liberal' colleagues, but I think *Plessy v. Ferguson*—the case upholding mandatory racial segregation—"was right and should be re-affirmed." To reassure concerned senators, Rehnquist wrote a letter explaining that, to the best of his recollection, the memo had been written at Jackson's request, and that it represented Jackson's views, not his own. Rehnquist's fellow-clerk, Donald Cronson, agreed that Jackson had asked for a memo opposing *Brown*, but he failed to corroborate Rehnquist's claim that it represented Jackson's views. Jackson himself had died in the fall of 1954, but his longtime secretary and confidante, Elsie Douglas, complained to reporters that Rehnquist had "smeared the reputation of a great Justice," and that Rehnquist's story was "incredible on its face."

Four years later, Richard Klugar published "Simple Justice," the definitive book on the *Brown* decision, and it reviewed the accumulated documentation concerning Rehnquist's early views on the constitutionality of racial segregation. "One finds a preponderance of evidence to suggest that the memorandum in question—the one that threatened to deprive William Rehnquist of his place on the Supreme Court—was an accurate statement of his own views on segregation, not those of Robert Jackson," Klugar wrote. Then another memo that Rehnquist had written to Jackson about race relations emerged. "It is about time the Court faced the fact that the white people in the South don't like the colored people," Rehnquist wrote in connection with *Terry v. Adams*, a 1953 case in which the Justices ruled that a Democratic Party organization in Texas could not exclude blacks from voting in its primaries. "The Constitution restrains them from effecting this dislike through state action, but it most assuredly did not appoint the Court as a sociological watchdog to rear up every time private discrim-

ination raises its admittedly ugly head.”

In 1986, when the Senate held hearings on Rehnquist's nomination to be Chief Justice, Senator Edward Kennedy, among others, questioned him closely about this evidence. Under oath, Rehnquist maintained that the original memo represented Jackson's views.

“Do the ‘Ts’ refer to you, Mr. Rehnquist?” Kennedy asked.

“No, I do not think they do,” Rehnquist replied.

Kennedy gave him another chance: “You maintain the ‘Ts’ refer, then, to Justice Jackson?”

Rehnquist dug in his heels, and answered, “Yes. Obviously something for him to say.”

Despite his Clintonian defense—it all depends on what I mean by “I”—Rehnquist was confirmed as Chief Justice by a vote of 65 to 33. Three years later, however, Bernard Schwartz, a leading historian of the Supreme Court, provided still more evidence that called into question Rehnquist's story: a 1954 draft concurring opinion in the Brown case that Justice Jackson himself wrote, but never issued, in which he declared, “I am convinced that present-day conditions require us to strike from our books the doctrine of separate-but-equal facilities.”

Is it fair to conclude that Rehnquist lied under oath? “Memories evolve over time, and the word ‘lie’ suggests a knowing statement made with an intention to mislead,” I was told by Mark Tushnet, a liberal constitutional historian at Georgetown, who wrote an article about Rehnquist's Brown memo in 1991. “It's accurate to say that the memo reflected one portion of Jackson's views. I think it's probably not accurate to say that it

didn't reflect Rehnquist's views.” Both Jackson and Rehnquist were struggling with the fact that they saw little constitutional justification for striking down segregated schools, however morally repugnant segregation might be. This placed them in a long and respectable tradition among legal scholars who were

of judicial restraint has been a recurring theme in his career. His jurisprudence has coincided so often with conservative ideals that it's sometimes hard to discern whether he is acting on principle or pursuing a political agenda. The *Times Magazine* called its 1985 profile of Rehnquist “The Partisan,” and there

is no question that his personal convictions and social ties fall in the conservative camp. It is also true that decisions made by the Rehnquist Court over the past decade, however inadvertently, precipitated President Clinton's impeachment. These include the rulings expanding sexual-harassment law, upholding the Independent Counsel law, and holding that a sitting President can be sued. But Rehnquist's opinions also reflect a relatively consistent application of the legal principle he invoked in his memo on Brown: that political majorities should be free to act upon their impulses, however brutal they may be, with little interference from the courts. In this view, a Justice's own politics are basically irrelevant: he or she should

let the political branches, rather than the courts, make the laws. And the same philosophy of restraint seems likely to guide Rehnquist as he presides over the President's trial in the Senate.

REHNQUIST's belief that the President and Congress shouldn't expect the courts to save them in times of crisis was apparent in 1988, when the Justices were asked to strike down the Independent Counsel law. In the heat of the Iran-Contra scandal, President Reagan decided that it was politically expedient to sign a reauthorization of



Debate about whether Rehnquist is a conservative ideologue or a principled advocate of judicial restraint has been a recurring theme in his career.

deeply skeptical about the power of the courts to effect social justice. This attitude was summed up by Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes in 1920, when he wrote to his friend Harold Laski, the political theorist, “If my fellow citizens want to go to Hell I will help them. It's my job.” By the nineteen-seventies, however, resistance to Brown was interpreted, retrospectively, as unvarnished racism—an interpretation that could have given Rehnquist a powerful incentive to deny his youthful views.

Debate about whether Rehnquist is a conservative ideologue or an advocate



the law, but he then dispatched his Solicitor General to argue that the Supreme Court should overturn it. "You can't expect the Supreme Court to take the political hit if the White House won't put its money where its mouth is," I was told by C. Boyden Gray, who was a White House counsel at the time. In a 7-to-1 opinion, which has been increasingly criticized by liberal and conservative legal scholars as simplistic and naïve, Rehnquist, writing for the Court, refused to overturn the law, predicting that it would not "impermissibly undermine" the powers of the executive branch, in part because the "tenure, duration... and duties" of an Independent Counsel would be limited by the United States Attorney General. In a solitary dissent, Justice Antonin Scalia predicted the profound ways that the Independent Counsel law would disrupt the balance of power among the three branches of government. "How much easier it is for Congress, instead of accepting the political damage attendant to the commencement of impeachment proceed-

ings against the President on trivial grounds... simply to trigger a debilitating criminal investigation of the Chief Executive under this law," Scalia wrote. "But even if it were entirely evident that unfairness was in fact the result—the judges—who appoint the independent counsel—"hostile to the Administration, the independent counsel an old foe of the President... there would be no one accountable to the public to whom the blame could be assigned."

Now Scalia has been vindicated. Rehnquist is in the awkward position of having appointed the three-judge panel that named Clinton's prosecutor, Kenneth Starr, as well as the head of that panel, Judge David Sentelle, of the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit. Sentelle is an enthusiastic Republican, who named his daughter Reagan in honor of his political hero, and who had lunch in the Senate dining room with two fierce Clinton critics, Senators Jesse Helms and Lauch Faircloth, days before he chose Starr as Independent Counsel to

replace the more moderate special prosecutor, Robert Fiske.

"The Chief Justice is kind of a loner, and I don't know if he has a lot of close friends, but Sentelle is part of whatever that circle is," Abner Mikva, a former White House counsel and a former colleague of Sentelle's on the United States Court of Appeals, told me. The day before Clinton's impeachment, I had lunch with Leonard Garment, the ebullient former counsel to Richard Nixon, and he mentioned that for more than a decade he, Rehnquist, Scalia, and Sentelle have been part of a penny-ante poker game that meets at a different member's house once a month on a Wednesday evening. Other players include William Bennett, Irving Kristol, and the Georgetown law professor Walter Berns—three conservative political theorists who have publicly criticized President Clinton. Judge Robert Bork used to be part of the game, but he was eased out after the defeat of his Supreme Court nomination, in 1987. According to Garment, "His mind was somewhere

else," and he kept forgetting the rules. (The President's lawyer Bob Bennett used to play, but stopped when he found himself arguing before the Supreme Court on the President's behalf.)

"Bill Rehnquist is in a sense the presiding officer, and he runs the game as if he were running the conference at the Court," Garment told me. "He moves the thing along, no fiddling around with the rules, and you don't have a lot of chitchat." By contrast, Sentelle, who once chaired the Mecklenburg County Republican Committee, in North Carolina, is, according to Garment, "a very jolly guy... big cigars, boots.... He conveys a sense that there's a ten-gallon hat on his head even if he's not wearing a hat." I asked Garment whether this merry band might be perceived as a conservative cabal, plotting over cigars to bring down the President. "Everybody's sort of constrained by a sense of propriety if we do talk about politics," Garment said. "There aren't any wild men."

Certainly Rehnquist's tenure as Chief Justice has been sober and evenhanded.

By avoiding personal rancor and overheated rhetoric, he has, over time, muted the perception of partisanship. This reassuring steadiness may have something to do with his upbringing. Raised in a middle-class Milwaukee suburb by Swedish parents (his father was a wholesale paper salesman), Rehnquist joined the U.S. Army Air Force and served as a weather observer in North Africa, received master's degrees in political science from Stanford and Harvard, and, in 1952, graduated first in his class from Stanford Law School, where he is said to have dated his future colleague Sandra Day O'Connor. After his clerkship with Justice Jackson, Rehnquist spent sixteen years as a trial lawyer in Phoenix, Arizona. He got to know Barry Goldwater and earned a reputation as a conservative activist, opposing the public-accommodations section of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and a proposal to integrate Phoenix public schools, in 1967. He also caught the attention of a lawyer named Richard Kleindienst, who was subsequently tapped to be President Nixon's Deputy Attorney General, and in 1969 Kleindienst hired Rehnquist as head of the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel. Rehnquist helped to vet Nixon's Supreme Court nominees before being nominated himself, in 1971. Nixon knew so little about Rehnquist that, a few weeks before the nomination, on Watergate-era tapes, he referred to a "group of clowns" in the Justice Department, including "Renchburg." According to Leonard Garment, Rehnquist was Nixon's second choice. "Howard Baker would have been named," Garment told me. "He got the call from John Mitchell, but said, 'I want overnight to think about it.' Famous mistake. John Mitchell liked Rehnquist very much . . . and decided to push that way. When Howard Baker tried to accept, it was too late."

Nixon wanted to reverse the direction of the Court, which during the nineteen-sixties had increasingly cast itself as an agent of social change and, in his view, usurped the powers of the political branches. But Rehnquist was the only first-rate conservative mind among Nixon's appointees. The insecure Harry Blackmun, the moderate Lewis Powell, and the grandiose Warren Burger were

less nimble and less inclined to cast themselves as what Nixon called "strict constructionists" of the Constitution. So it often fell to Rehnquist, in a series of energetic dissents, to plant the seeds for a judicial counter-revolution—one that wouldn't fully flower until the nineteen-nineties. In *Roe v. Wade* and in a range of other cases, Rehnquist maintained persistently that, within narrow constitutional limits, political majorities could make decisions about individual rights.

But Rehnquist's commitment to a kind of judicial abstinence has not been unwavering. He is less inclined to defer to the political branches in cases involving states' rights, property rights, and race. During the past two decades, maintaining that the Constitution is color-blind, he has lent his support to a series of important decisions striking down affirmative-action programs and voting districts constructed for the benefit of racial minorities. These departures have fed the suspicion that Rehnquist is sometimes swayed by his political sympathies. Nevertheless, he has voted with the liberals on occasion as well—he joined Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, for example, to strike down the Virginia Military Institute's policy of excluding women—largely because he respects judicial precedents more than do some of the fire-breathing Reagan and Bush appointees who followed him.

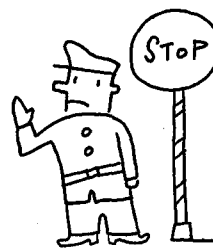
When Rehnquist became Chief Justice, in 1986, his behavior on the Court began to change. He seemed to lose interest in writing zealous dissents, and reinvented himself as a consensus builder, who was willing to moderate his positions in order to win the votes of less conservative colleagues. Scalia inherited the role of lone dissenter, while Rehnquist modelled himself more on Charles Evans Hughes, the New Deal Chief Justice who believed, as Rehnquist wrote in an admiring tribute in 1976, "that unanimity of decision contributed to public confidence in the Court." Rehnquist's dissents as an Associate Justice had crackled with energy; his laconic opinions for the Court as Chief Justice sometimes read like hasty summaries of the government's brief.

Five years after he became Chief Justice, Rehnquist was deeply affected

by the death of his wife of thirty-eight years, Natalie, to whom he was devoted. Her long struggle with ovarian cancer devastated him. "Nan Rehnquist was feisty and funny, and he was tremendously dependent on her in every way," I was told by Michael Young, a former Rehnquist clerk, who is now dean of the George Washington University Law School. "Once, she went to take care of her father in Minneapolis. She had been gone a day and a half, and he came into the office and asked if any of us had an extra belt. . . . Then he asked if anyone had a razor." Rehnquist is close to his children—a son and two daughters—and his personal life has always been above reproach. Even his hobbies have a comfortably nostalgic, nineteen-fifties quality: he is a fiercely competitive bridge and croquet player, and he is fond of singing carols around the piano during the Supreme Court's annual holiday party, where he insists on a fully trimmed Christmas tree, despite regular protests from civil-libertarian clerks.

Rehnquist is a quick worker, who demands that his clerks produce drafts within ten days after a case is argued, and who tries to be out of the court by 3 P.M., when he often takes a swim. He also runs the Justices' weekly conferences with brisk efficiency. Unlike Chief Justice Burger, who let discussion wander, Rehnquist discourages debate and assigns the most coveted opinions to colleagues who circulate their drafts on time. Even the Justices who disagree with him concede that Rehnquist has been a highly effective Chief Justice. He is respected by liberal and conservative colleagues for fair-mindedness in assigning

opinions and for imposing discipline in the courtroom, where he often cuts lawyers off in midsentence once their time has expired. Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who shares his passion for Gilbert and Sullivan and for keeping lawyers on schedule, affectionately refers to him as "my Chief." During the past decade, Rehnquist has found time to write three books of narrative history. The most recent, "All the Laws but One," about Lincoln's suspension of certain civil liberties during the Civil War, was



published this fall to favorable reviews.

Aware of Rehnquist's reputation for strict management in the courtroom, some Senate Republicans have said that they hope to conclude the trial of Bill Clinton in a matter of weeks, and an even tighter schedule is under consideration. But this timetable seems optimistic. The trial of Andrew Johnson involved no serious factual disputes: everyone agreed that Johnson had fired his Secretary of War without the permission of Congress, and the only question was whether the firing violated the constitutionally questionable Tenure of Office Act. But, as Rehnquist notes in his book on the Johnson impeachment, the Senate trial dragged on for almost two months, in part because the senators indulged in their prerogative to argue about the admissibility of every contested piece of evidence.

The allegations against Clinton are infinitely more complicated to prosecute and to defend than those against Johnson were, requiring a tangle of highly subjective judgments about the credibility of conflicting witnesses, the motivations, feelings, and actions of two parties to an adulterous affair, and the possibility of prosecutorial misconduct. Anyone looking for clues about how Rehnquist is likely to run the trial of Bill Clinton might examine a trial that he presided over in 1984: a little-noticed case, it suggests that, far from allowing either side to cut corners, Rehnquist's instinct is to let the jury hear as much evidence as possible.

IN the nineteenth century, Supreme Court Justices routinely travelled around the country trying cases in district courts. In the twentieth century, the custom fell out of use, until early 1984, when Rehnquist found himself at a Bar Association lunch in Richmond. Sitting at the head table with D. Dortch Warriner, a federal district judge, Rehnquist reportedly mentioned that he had never presided over a real trial and that it might be refreshing to do so. (The Supreme Court can become a "two-dimensional world," Rehnquist later explained to the *Times Magazine*,

and he wanted to reacquaint himself with "the very three-dimensional world in which trial lawyers and trial judges live.") Warriner found a case that he thought would interest Rehnquist, and several months later the Justice returned to Richmond to hear it.

The civil action involved a free-speech claim by two police officers in the Virginia town of Colonial Beach. One of them had seen a fellow-officer beat a teen-age suspect, and both officers decided to file affidavits about the incident. When they were briefly suspended from their jobs for violating a Police Department regulation by speaking publicly, they sued the town for violating their right of free speech. They further charged that the Police Department had abused its power by winking at official misconduct and then engineering a coverup.

Rehnquist made a few small gaffes during the two-day trial. After lunch on the first day, for example, he took his seat on the bench and asked for the first witness to be called; it was pointed out to him that the jury had not yet been summoned to the box. Lawyers for both sides later told me, however, that the Chief Justice presided with fairness and skill, resisting all efforts to speed up the trial by excluding evidence. "He has a fairly liberal view as to the kind of evidence that's material," I was told by the whistle-blowers' lawyer, S. Keith Barker. For example, over objections from the lawyer for the town, he admitted evidence about other allegations of police brutality.

While the jury was deliberating, lawyers from both sides joined Rehnquist for pizza in Judge Warriner's chambers. After several hours, the jury sided with the whistle-blowers, and Rehnquist later denied the city's motion to set aside the jury verdict, holding that the exposure of the coverup was constitutionally protected. Interestingly, though, Rehnquist's ruling was later reversed by the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, which held that he had interpreted First Amendment law too expansively. (The Supreme Court, in a decision from which Rehnquist recused himself, refused to hear an appeal.)



"I was concerned that I had someone who was reported to be very conservative and maybe not too friendly to a case against law enforcement, but I found the opposite," Barker told me. "His view is 'These are the basic parameters of the law, and if you have the evidence it's going to be up to the jury to figure out what to do.'" Everything that Rehnquist has written about the impeachment process suggests that he will be inclined to conduct the trial of President Clinton in the same way. Rehnquist has the authority, under Senate rules, to decide all questions of evidence, "including, but not limited to, questions of relevancy, materiality, and redundancy," but is subject to being overruled by a majority of the Senate. It's not hard to imagine Rehnquist's pompous predecessor, Warren Burger, issuing sweeping rulings on contested questions, accompanied by windy memos designed to persuade the senators to defer to his authority. Rehnquist seems more likely to put any controversial question to a Senate vote, without trying to influence or short-circuit the senators' debate. If Republicans or Democrats are counting on Rehnquist to save them from the political consequences of a protracted trial, they have the wrong man.

LET'S assume, for the sake of argument, that the Senate does not abort the trial soon after it begins. The President's lawyers might then ask Rehnquist to dismiss the impeachment articles on the ground that even if the allegations are true they don't rise to the level of impeachable offenses. Rehnquist is likely to refer this question to the Senate rather than to reveal his own views on the matter—views that may be closer to those of the President's lawyers than to those of House Republicans. In his book on the Johnson impeachment, Rehnquist suggests that Presidents shouldn't be impeached for anything short of crimes against the government. He criticizes the bitterly partisan House Judiciary Committee of the Johnson era, whose operation, he says, "was less like that of a grand jury . . . than like that of the manager of a political candidate's campaign looking into what charges might be made against a political opponent." Rehnquist argues that the Senate

was right to acquit Johnson of violating the ambiguously worded Tenure of Office Act. "It would be extraordinary to remove from office a president who violated a law when the meaning of the law is at best ambiguous," he writes. "The importance of these acquittals can hardly be overstated," because it established that "not any technical violation of the law" would qualify as an impeachable offense, but only "the sort of violation of the law that would justify removal from office." Had the Senate convicted Johnson, instead of acquitting him, "a long shadow would have been cast over the independence of the President," Rehnquist emphasized, and "the nation would have moved closer to a regime of the sort of congressional supremacy that was dreaded by men such as James Madison, the Father of the Constitution."

Still, Rehnquist's views on the possible merits of the Clinton impeachment can't be gleaned from his book. When he refers, near the end, to the impeachment articles against President Richard Nixon that were introduced in the House Judiciary Committee in 1974 (Nixon resigned before the full House voted), Rehnquist writes that "the counts relating to the obstruction of justice and to the unlawful use of executive power were of the kind that would surely have justified removal from office." Moreover, Rehnquist's efforts to construct a unanimous decision in *Clinton v. Jones* make it clear that he is deeply committed to the proposition that the President is not above the law.

Yet he is unlikely to impose his legal views on the Senate. In 1989, Judge Walter Nixon, Jr., was impeached by the House and removed from the bench by the Senate after a criminal court convicted him of lying to a federal grand jury in a bribery case. Judge Nixon appealed to the Supreme Court, on the ground that the full Senate had delegated some of its trial duties to a committee. But Rehnquist, writing for the majority, held that since the Senate had the "sole power" to try impeachment cases, the standards and procedures it applied shouldn't be second-guessed by judges. At that time, Kenneth Starr was Solicitor General, and he insisted that Congress could impeach federal officials for the most

trivial of felonies—even, as he noted during the oral argument, if they were to "poison a neighbor's cat."

If the Clinton trial proceeds toward a verdict, Rehnquist will be presented with many complex disputes about law, facts, and evidence. His past behavior suggests that he will be inclined to put important questions to a vote, setting off vicious partisan debates about whether the Senate will hear about Clinton's relationships with other women or about Starr's treatment of witnesses. The House Judiciary Committee made many arbitrary decisions about limiting the scope of its hearings, deciding, for example, not to call Monica Lewinsky, Linda Tripp, or other key witnesses. But Charles Tiefer, who teaches law at the University of Baltimore and is an authority on Senate

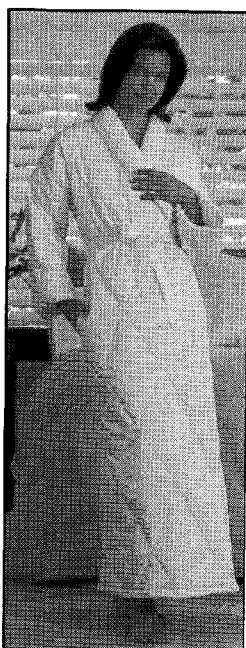
procedures, predicts that if Majority Leader Trent Lott, for example, proposes similar shortcuts in the Senate, "it is Chief Justice Rehnquist who will stand in their path and say, 'Not in my courtroom you don't.'"

Thanks largely to the Rehnquist Court, both liberals and conservatives have been learning not to look to judges to fight their political battles for them. The impeachment proceedings that are about to begin may represent the harsh culmination of this trend. In his memo to Justice Jackson nearly fifty years ago, Rehnquist wrote, "The Constitution does not prevent the majority from banding together, nor does it attain success in the effort." In other words, if the President and Congress want to take the country to Hell, Rehnquist may consider it his job to help them. ♦



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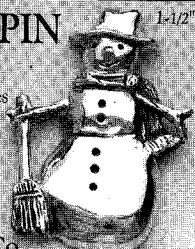
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HUMANITIES ABROAD

THE DIPLOMATIC LIFE

THE DREAM OF ALBANIANS

Why is the United States in Kosovo? The author travelled with the Administration's high-profile, improvising special envoy to find out.

BY MICHAEL IGNATIEFF

TEN days before Christmas Eve, the stately Richard Holbrooke—Balkan magician and foreign-policy freelancer—was strolling through the Plaka, the old market in Athens, eating a bag of roasted chestnuts bought from a street vender. He looked taller and thinner than he appears in photographs but was just as voluble as his high-volume reputation. He was discoursing loudly on ostracism, the ancient Athenian democratic practice by which citizens voted annually to banish the most egregiously offensive of their politicians. This practice, he seemed to be suggesting, was worth emulating. Five thousand miles away, of course, American democracy was preparing its own version of ostracism: the impeachment of a President. While Holbrooke was talking, a wedge of Greek security men guided him and his party toward a taverna for souvlaki. They passed a refugee from Kosovo playing a blue plastic accordion, his Yugoslav passport in a yellow cup at his feet. Just then, Holbrooke's cell phone rang. It was Christopher Hill, the American Ambassador to Macedonia, calling from a snowy road in Yugoslavia between Kosovo and Belgrade. Holbrooke stopped in the middle of the Plaka, as tourists and bystanders eyed him curiously—a rangy fifty-seven-year-old American talking at the top of his voice. Then he put his phone away and announced to the world at large that a meeting with the Yugoslav President, Slobodan Milosevic, which Holbrooke had been trying to arrange all weekend, was finally confirmed for the next evening at six, in Belgrade.

This, I was being encouraged to believe, was how American diplomacy was carried out, at least when Holbrooke was in charge: on the run, in the street, between a visit to a jewelry store and a meal in a taverna. Diplomacy was not like chess, Holbrooke told me; it was more

like jazz—a constant improvisation on a theme. He had invited me along to watch the performance.

At the time, Bill Clinton was in Israel, lobbying to keep a Middle East peace initiative from foundering. In the Persian Gulf, Tomahawk cruise missiles were being readied for launch on Iraq. Back in Washington, the Administration was struggling, unsuccessfully, to save the President from impeachment. And in the Balkans trouble was about to erupt. Everyone, it seemed, was improvising.

I had joined Holbrooke two days earlier, in Istanbul, where he met with Greek and Turkish businessmen to try to chip away at the deadlock that had divided Cyprus for twenty-five years. Holbrooke was the Administration's special envoy for the island. He was also the special envoy for the Balkans (following on his success in negotiating the 1995 Dayton agreement, which ended the war in Bosnia). And this fall he had been given the most challenging task of all: to oversee United States policy in Kosovo, an impoverished southern province of Yugoslavia, where predominantly Muslim ethnic Albanians outnumber the Serbs who govern them by a ratio of ten to one, and where an armed insurrection, led by the Kosovo Liberation Army, had been growing steadily in strength since it began, two years before. In fact, in all southeastern Europe, Holbrooke was probably the most influential individual shaping American foreign policy. And yet, oddly, he was a private citizen, a vice-chairman of Credit Suisse First Boston in New York.

FOR some time, Serb tanks had controlled Kosovo's capital, Pristina, and the highways that lead to it, but everything else in the province—mountains, villages, dirt roads, and forest paths—was in the hands of the Kosovo Liberation Army. The fighting had now stopped—winter seemed to have frozen the combatants in place—but there was

fear that it would resume in the spring. In October, Holbrooke had succeeded in compelling Milosevic to “internationalize” the Kosovo problem—that is, to recognize that it was no longer a strictly internal matter. It had taken an order from NATO headquarters permitting the bombing of Yugoslav installations to make Milosevic give

on a single theme: a deal that granted the Kosovars limited autonomy at a local level while sidestepping the question of independence. Hill was committed to what one might call the Holbrooke doctrine: Realpolitik with a human face—which meant relentless pressure combined with the faith that, through persistence, pestering, badgering, and threats, all sides

had been provided by the United States Air Force. But he seemed to relish the prospect. He was someone who appeared to come alive in a crisis, and this was clearly not just a *crise du jour*. He plunged into the task ahead, reading a sheaf of faxes he had received overnight from the State Department—a portfolio of briefing points for the meeting.



Diplomacy was not like chess, Holbrooke told me; it was more like jazz—a constant improvisation on a theme.

ground, but eventually a kind of truce agreement had been forged.

The agreement was to be monitored by something called the Kosovo Verification Mission—two thousand unarmed observers, dispatched by the fifty-four-nation Organization for Security and Coöperation in Europe. The organization, based in Vienna, was a European outfit, but it was also part of an American-made tool kit for the region. The commander of the monitors in Kosovo, for instance, was the American diplomat William Walker. The chief negotiator between the two sides, Chris Hill, was also American. Hill, who was the United States special envoy for Kosovo, had been handed the toughest assignment—to make Milosevic and a negotiating team from Kosovo agree on a future for the province. Milosevic was adamant about Kosovo remaining part of Yugoslavia; the Kosovars were equally adamant that they would accept nothing less than independence. Hill's proposals were all variations

might come to accept a saving compromise they had originally refused to consider.

OUR trip to Belgrade began, the next morning, with grim news: the night before, thirty-one Kosovar guerrillas had been killed by Yugoslav forces as they crossed the mountains from Albania into Kosovo. It was the most serious military incident since the October truce. Then, twelve hours later, masked gunmen, armed with automatic weapons, burst into a café in the town of Pec, in western Kosovo, and opened fire. More than twenty people were shot, almost all of them unarmed Serb teenagers. Four were confirmed dead. Kosovar guerrillas had kidnapped civilians in the past but had not been known to shoot them in cold blood, and the Pec attack appeared to signal an ominous change of tactics.

“We are headed into a real mess,” Holbrooke said as we flew from Athens to Belgrade in a small executive jet that

“People say I have no instructions,” Holbrooke joked, acknowledging a widely held perception that he was a rule unto himself. “Actually, I have twelve pages of them here.” He described an informal “collective” of people who control policy in the Balkans: Sandy Berger, the national-security adviser; Strobe Talbott, the Deputy Secretary of State; and, of course, Madeleine Albright, the Secretary of State. Then, for the first time in days, as the serrated peaks of the Balkans, dusted with the winter's first snow, rolled out below us, Holbrooke fell silent; he was sunk into his stack of faxes, making notes for the meeting with Milosevic.

FEW people in the West know the wily dictator as well as Holbrooke does, yet after years of negotiations their meetings have grown increasingly controversial. Senator Richard Lugar, a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, has suggested that open discussions with Milosevic had the



*"I'll have a bourbon hot toddy." "Make that two."
 "Let's see, I'll have a Kahlúa and coffee." "I'll have a hot buttered rum."
 "And bring me an Irish coffee, please."*

effect of legitimatizing the dictator's rule. Even James Rubin, Albright's spokesman in the State Department, raised an objection in a briefing at the beginning of December: "Milosevic has been at the center of every crisis in the former Yugoslavia over the last decade. He is not simply part of the problem; Milosevic is the problem." When I asked Holbrooke about the Rubin briefing, he rolled his eyes. He knew that the Administration, and particularly Albright, had to avoid seeming to be cozy with Milosevic. Yet there was no realistic prospect of overthrowing his regime. That left only one alternative: talking to the dictator.

The Dayton agreement made Holbrooke's reputation as a negotiator, but he clearly wanted to be seen as something of a grand strategist in the Kissinger mold, if not in the same vein. He thought of himself as more of a liberal moralist than Henry Kissinger, and this was hardly surprising, since Kissinger had been scathing about American attempts to hold together a multiethnic Bosnia and keep the region from splintering into ethnic states. Holbrooke was eager to demonstrate that Dayton marked a watershed in the use of American power. He believed that it illustrated what American leadership

could do: the United States, with its immense authority, its insistence on round-the-clock negotiations, and the threat of air strikes, was able to put an end to a bloody civil war and impose a peace that avoided the moral evils of ethnic partition.

One curious feature of Holbrooke's vision was how little place it accorded the United Nations, especially as he was Clinton's choice to be its next American Ambassador—although his nomination, like so many other things in Washington, was stalled, awaiting Senate approval. Holbrooke was both sentimental about the work of the U.N.'s humanitarian-relief agencies and ruthlessly pragmatic about the Security Council. In his thinking, the council's purpose seemed to be, essentially, to provide international ratification of policy initiatives that, if they were to work at all, had to be supported by firm American leadership.

This approach irritates Europeans, who talk of Holbrooke as a kind of imperial proconsul of the Balkans—yet another in a line of Americans who have tried to reshape the region into some sort of coherent design. Woodrow Wilson was the first: in 1918, he enunciated the right of self-determination for the peoples of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires, and the draftsmen at Ver-

sailles then laid out the borders that the Balkan states have been fighting over, off and on, ever since. Holbrooke, in his account of the Dayton process, "To End a War," quotes Harold Nicolson's summary of Wilson's failure: "America, eternally protected by the Atlantic, desired to satisfy her self-righteousness while disengaging her responsibility."

Eighty years later, America continues to try to remedy the errors of Versailles, but its investment is still small. Holbrooke's own progress was, in fact, conspicuously modest. The plane heading to Belgrade was empty: he had no staff, carried his own bags, and depended on the local embassies for their fax machines, hospitality, and intelligence. However grand Holbrooke's ambitions for American power in the region may be, America doesn't really want much part in them. The Pentagon opposed bombing Milosevic in October and is reluctant to commit American troops to Kosovo.

Most Americans don't even know where Kosovo is. Thus Holbrooke's real achievement: if not him, then nobody.

WHEN Milosevic came to power, in 1989, he abolished the limited autonomy that the Kosovars had enjoyed under Tito. Ever since, Serbian police have brutally suppressed any manifestation of Kosovar independence. But the abuses of human rights are not enough to justify American involvement. There is a threat of a different order, one you understand when you fly there from Istanbul or Athens: if Kosovo explodes, other countries could well go up in flames with it. Kosovo is at the center of a combustible region, directly above the failed state of Albania.

In early 1997, following the collapse of a nationwide pyramid-investment scheme, Albania disintegrated. Its Army disbanded, and the population looted the government arsenals—making off with an estimated three million grenades and bombs and seven hundred thousand rifles. These arms quickly found their way into the hands of Kosovar guerrillas who now gather in Albania, train there, and cross the border into their homeland. A full-scale uprising was soon under way in Kosovo. And there was no reason that it

should stop there. Nearby Montenegro, Macedonia, and Greece also have substantial ethnic Albanian populations who dream of a greater Albanian state that would combine Kosovo and Albania with their nations' own Albanian areas.

Underlying the Kosovo problem, then, is a serious dilemma—one that pits Realpolitik against high principle. If Kosovo is forced, by whatever means, to remain in Yugoslavia, then its people are almost certain to be subjected to a future of endless brutality at the hands of the Milosevic government; on the other hand, if Kosovo is granted its independence, it is equally certain to destabilize all of NATO's southern region.

As the plane began its descent into a cold and misty Belgrade, Holbrooke suddenly expressed concern that he hadn't visited Kosovo. Things in Pristina looked bad, he admitted, and he felt he needed to go there. By the time the plane reached the terminal, Holbrooke had resolved to turn around and take off again. He bounded forward to the cockpit to talk to the pilot. There was, he felt, just enough time to improvise a trip to Kosovo before his meeting with Milosevic. Calls were placed to Milosevic's office. Flight clearance was sought. This, I was starting to learn, was a typical Holbrooke maneuver, a jazz moment. He would throw Milosevic off guard, energize the lonely, weary team of monitors and American staffers on the ground in Pristina, and get a chance to see for himself just how bad the situation was.

While we waited in the terminal, we learned that the death toll at Pec was now six, and that fifteen Serbian teen-agers were still in the Pristina hospital, recovering from bullet wounds. Meanwhile, Holbrooke began rapidly assembling a team for the Kosovo visit. There were two high-powered American diplomats: William Walker, who ran the verification mission, and Richard Miles, the head of the American Embassy in Belgrade. And there were two Europeans: an elegant Austrian Ambassador in a loden coat, who happened to be passing through (Wolfgang Petritsch, the European Union's representative in Kosovo), and a British major general, John Drewienkiewicz, who was a deputy chief of the verification mission. The Americans and the Europeans got on awkwardly. Publicly, of course, they were all smiles. But

privately the Europeans fulminate against American arrogance, and the Americans are scathing about European feebleness of will. In practice, each side knows that it can't do without the other.

The final member of the team was Shaun Byrnes, another American, dressed in khakis and Top-Siders, who was shy and soft-spoken. Byrnes dealt directly with the guerrillas, driving into the so-called liberated areas, seeking them out in safe houses, on farms, or in the middle of woods that might be a mile or two from the nearest road. Once he reached Pristina, his job would be to discover who had carried out the Pec attack. He would then try to get the guerrillas to dissociate themselves from it and repudiate it publicly—a tactic for preserving the truce.

I asked Byrnes if he feared being taken hostage.

He shrugged. He was American, he said, and killing an American would be a tactical mistake. What's more, the guerrillas held onto the idealistic hope that America would inevitably support them because their struggle for independence was right and good. "They think we support their goals," another American official told me. "But that's only because they're not listening to us. They hear the music, but they don't pay attention to the words."

This was at the heart of what could be seen as an evasive policy of procrastination. In a generation, *perhaps*, American officials conceded, Kosovo might gain its independence. In ten or twenty years, it was *possible* that the two hundred thousand or so remaining Serbs would have been driven out and Yugoslavia bled to exhaustion by the cost of holding down an ethnic Albanian majority that was in permanent revolt. But that was in the future. For now, the prospect of a Kosovar state was too alarming to the Greeks, Macedonians, and Montenegrins for the Americans to allow it to happen. So Shaun Byrnes had to tell the fighters in farmhouses and on mountaintops that they couldn't count on American support. And Chris Hill had to tell their political representatives to cut a deal with Milosevic. It wasn't a particularly attractive op-

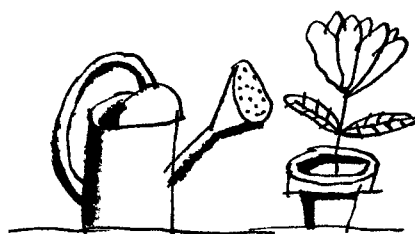
tion, but it was, the reasoning went, more attractive than a bloodbath.

Suddenly, Holbrooke became worried. Was he "too far ahead of the wagon train"? He phoned home—to the nerve center of modern American diplomacy, the Operations Center at the State Department—to let everyone know that his plans had changed. Albright was in Jerusalem with the President, and Talbott was in Madrid at a conference on Bosnia. They would want to be kept informed.

Once airborne again, Holbrooke was briefed by Drewienkiewicz about the border incursion. The General drew a map on a sheet of foolscap, and marked the spots where his verification team had found the bodies in the snowy woods near the Albanian border. Holbrooke wanted to know whether the incident had been a firefight or an ambush—or an execution. The Serbs have a reputation for executing prisoners. In this case, though, prisoners had survived, and the monitors were trying to get in to see them.

At the airport in Pristina, less than thirty minutes later, there was a motorcade waiting for us—a line of orange Chevrolet Suburbans with bulletproof windows and plated doors. The cars passed by Kosovo Polje, a vast plain ringed with low mountains, where the Serbian rulers went down at the hands of the Turks in 1389—and thus delivered Kosovar lands into the Ottoman Empire for more than five centuries. This was where the Serbian dream of reconquering Kosovo was born, though it wasn't realized until just before the First World War. And it was here, in 1989, that Milosevic held his infamous rally, which incited Serb minorities to rise up against the Croatian state in 1991 and, the following year, against the Bosnians. Less than a decade later, the Serbs had been driven out of Croatia and defeated in Bosnia, and were on the run in Kosovo. That decade helps explain why even Serbs opposed to Milosevic believe that they shouldn't compromise over Kosovo. To give up Kosovo would be to admit, finally, the extent of their historical disaster.

We reached the operations room of Pristina's verification mission, housed in a desolate office building, where the city was on view through smeared windows. I could hear the distant pop-pop echo of small-arms fire as Holbrooke was briefed again on the border incursion. The incident had occurred between two and six in



the morning, in hilly terrain. The monitors had reached the site quickly—while the bodies were still warm. (I found out later that the death toll was higher than had been thought—probably thirty-six.)

What weapons were the guerrillas carrying? Holbrooke asked.

AK-47s and RPGs, he was told. These presumably had come if not from the looted Albanian armories then from Albanians in exile in other parts of Europe and in North America. Holbrooke knew the strength of this diaspora: in New York, Albanian taxi-drivers button-holed him, and restaurateurs in the West Fifties berated him for talking to Milosevic.

Later, Holbrooke was handed a set of color photographs that had been taken by the monitors. They depicted what he calls the European Ho Chi Minh Trail: although the snow was calf-deep and a morning fog had settled against the slope of a hill, a faint path was visible. It was through this trail that the Kosovar uprising was resupplied. In the foreground of the pictures, near the bodies, were sniper rifles, grenades, water bottles, and scattered Serb dinars. The eyes of most of the victims were open. Some had bled from the mouth. The snow around them was stained. Most were wearing combat fatigues. Holbrooke looked more closely: there were no execution-style entry wounds or powder burns. They appeared to have been ambushed by Serb sharpshooters equipped with night sights. The guerrillas had probably died without knowing where the bullets were coming from. One was a young woman with shining brown hair strewn over the snow, her eyes staring sightless up at the sky. She was an ominous example of what American policymakers had to face: there are many young women and men like her, prepared to give their lives on a dark mountain trail to free their people. Such determination would not be satisfied by the humble offerings that Chris Hill carried around in his briefcase.

At the same time, there was the sheer anger and terror of the Serbs. There had already been demonstrations against the verification mission. Shots had been fired in Pec. The monitors' orange cars had been stoned. The funerals of the six teenagers would be held in the next few days, and the occasion was certain to be dangerous. Holbrooke asked the British offi-

cers in the briefing room what they would do if this were Northern Ireland.

They would step up armed foot patrols, they said, and sweep the area with armored vehicles. "But we haven't that luxury here," one of the officers added. The monitors are unarmed. If they come under sustained fire from either side, they will have to be removed. In neighboring Macedonia, NATO has an extraction force—known as "the dentists"—ready to pull them out to safety.

Holbrooke's next appointment—on a day of makeshift appointments—was

with two Kosovar editors. He has always worked the local and international press assiduously, promoting himself, his vision, and, above all, his conviction that American power can make the vital

difference between chaos and peace. Besides, journalists are a key source of information, and talking to them can be a reality check, a way of escaping "the absurd bubble" of shuttle diplomacy.

The editors' prognosis was discouraging. The Kosovar leadership had spent years in Serbian jails. Its taste for compromise had long since vanished. Some Kosovars believed that it might be in their interest to drive out the monitors: they might then be replaced by armed NATO soldiers, who would have the means to impose independence—or, at least, partition—on Milosevic.

Holbrooke quickly countered: even if the monitors were driven out, he said, there was no guarantee that NATO troops would replace them. The ethnic Albanians would then be on their own, face to face with Milosevic's tanks and helicopter gunships.

The Pristina visit was over. At the airport, as we were waiting on the runway, a small, snub-nosed Yugoslav MIG appeared. It flew low and close, then veered up, its afterburner jetting out in a bright-orange flame. Holbrooke shrugged. This was standard Milosevic. No visit to Pristina, he said, was complete without it. Was Milosevic expressing his irritation that Holbrooke was in Pristina, or was this just a perverse greeting?

WE touched down in Belgrade as dusk was falling. The most lunatic motorcade of the day ensued as cars fishtailed in and out of the lanes on the highway from the airport, with

Milosevic's police in a black BMW at the front, leaning out the windows and frantically waving traffic off to the side of the road. When we reached the residence of Richard Miles, Holbrooke wandered off into the garden, with his cell phone clamped to his ear—he was talking to the American Presidential party. Then he went into another meeting, this time with Serbian journalists from the opposition media. They were agitated about the shootings in Pec. The Serbs, having initiated ethnic cleansing throughout the former Yugoslavia, were now trying to come to terms with the idea that ethnic cleansing could be turned against them.

One journalist wanted to know what the Americans were doing to reassure them.

"Are you afraid?" Holbrooke asked. "Why?" His intention was to deflate the rhetoric, to be comforting. But it was evident that he had failed. Innocent teenagers had been killed, and that night the Serbian media were united in their call for vengeance.

Veran Matic, one of the country's most independent and resourceful editors, took Holbrooke aside. He knew that Holbrooke would be meeting with Milosevic in less than an hour. Why, he wanted to know, was Holbrooke still talking to Milosevic at all?

Who, Holbrooke replied pointedly, was capable of mounting a credible opposition?

Matic shrugged eloquently.

If there was a local Aung San Suu Kyi, Holbrooke continued, referring to the Nobel Prize-winning Burmese dissident, he'd be talking to her. "Instead, there are only discredited opposition leaders, who can't stand to be in the same room with each other. The responsibility for creating democracy in Serbia rests with you, not with us." This was a phrase that American diplomats in this region had been repeating since the days of Woodrow Wilson.

THEN, finally, with barely forty-five minutes to spare, Holbrooke began preparing for the meeting with Milosevic. Embassy officials were dispatched to find a text describing the terms of a ceasefire that had been agreed to by Kosovar guerrillas in the Malisevo region. Holbrooke had hoped to confirm that ceasefire with Milosevic, but after a fran-



tic search the text couldn't be found. Fifteen minutes later, a message came from Shaun Byrnes: he had reached the guerrillas, and they had denied responsibility for the attack in the café. Holbrooke demanded that Byrnes go back and get them to disown the attack publicly: he needed a public statement. "Right now!" Holbrooke shouted. But it was too late. By the time Holbrooke had to leave, he had nothing firm to tell Milosevic.

Holbrooke, of course, had an agenda: the crackdown on the local media, Serbian war criminals, concessions to the Kosovar uprising. But when he and Chris Hill returned to their hotel, exhausted, five and a half hours later, it was clear that they had got nothing. The killing of the Serb teen-agers had provided Milosevic with a pretext for refusing to negotiate on any issue. Upstairs in the long hallways of the hotel, Holbrooke expressed his frustration, oblivious of the microphones that Milosevic's police had probably planted in every heating duct: "Before we even sat down, he was onto us about those Serb teen-agers. And he didn't let up all night."

Holbrooke took a call from Madeleine Albright. He seemed grateful for the attention, but when he hung up he looked around at the spent and dispirited American staffers, their heads bent, in the gloomy hallway. "Jesus Christ," he said, "is it depressing?"

A day of improvisation had gone very wrong, and the whole fragile architecture of the October settlement that had been put together only after threat of air strikes was in danger. Chris Hill, leaning against the door of his room, tie askew, face puffy with exhaustion, said before turning in for the night, "Can you believe that we are still trying to liquidate the Ottoman Empire?"

THE next morning, Holbrooke was returning to New York. He was flying via Rome, and Hill joined him—he had a meeting with the Italian foreign minister. En route, they assessed the Kosovar leadership. Kosovo did have nonviolent leaders, who preferred negotiation to civil war, but the fighting had eroded their legitimacy, and the initiative was passing rapidly into the hands of the military commanders in the mountains and outlying villages. Milosevic refused to speak to anyone from the Kosovo Liberation Army, and there was a risk that Hill would soon

have no one to negotiate with on the Kosovar side.

Hill had a proposal that he claimed—publicly at least—could work. It was a complex plan for power sharing and compromise, and versions of it were being considered by both sides. But what would happen if they agreed to it? How would it be enforced? The Americans would lean on the Europeans to come up with money to remedy the region's chronic poverty. But then they would also have to ask NATO to deploy an armed force to keep the two sides apart. This was not a feature of the proposal that anyone wanted to talk about.

After forty-eight hours of frantic improvisation, Holbrooke's strategy appeared to be not much more than a ploy to buy time. And now time was running out. After his visit, the body of the Serbian district mayor of Kosovo Polje was found on the road to the Pristina airport; he had been badly beaten and shot between the eyes. Within a week, Yugoslav tanks had left their barracks and, in violation of the truce, were attacking guerrilla strongholds. In Pec and other Kosovar towns, the Serbian police burst into houses and farms and beat up Kosovars. Men were dragged off to prison. The monitors could only observe the violations and could do nothing to stop the violence. There were now calls for them to be withdrawn: why should they risk being kidnapped, injured, or killed when most people could see that the truce was bound to collapse?

As Holbrooke boarded his plane to New York, he described his visit to me as a "work in progress." But what, exactly, is this work progressing toward? Holbrooke and a dedicated team of diplomats are committed to the proposition that only American leadership can bring stability to the Balkans. The Americans, they believe, are the only people in the world still capable of the optimism, the resolve, and the ruthlessness necessary to replace the Ottomans and Austro-Hungarians. They are, that is, the only people with the character required for an imperial vocation. It's a controversial sentiment. But Holbrooke's greatest problem is this: the Americans are turning out to be very reluctant imperialists. And, in any case, the world's most powerful nation has its attention fixed elsewhere. The night that Holbrooke arrived in New York, the first cruise missiles landed in Iraq. Kosovo had vanished from Western attention. ♦

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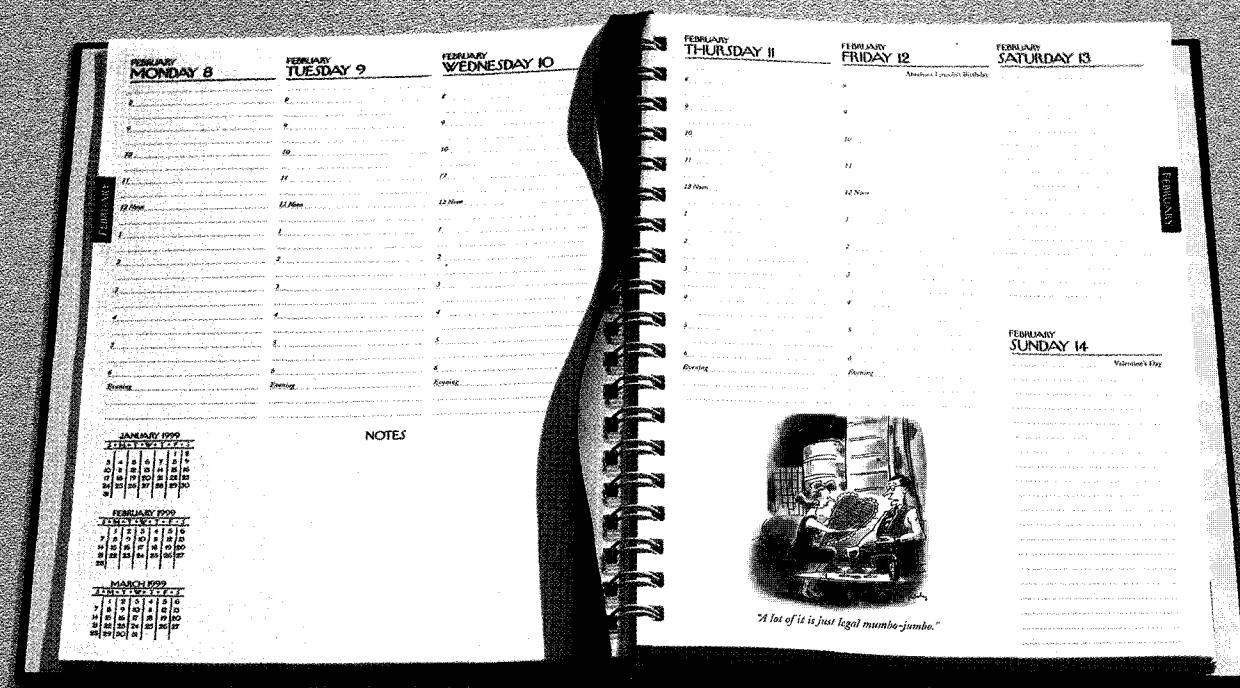
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- 10 REAL TIME (hidden)
- 11 (g)LOBES
- 13 SE(D)ER
- 15 CORDELIA (anag.)
- 17 MI(D)ST
- 18 R + IS + K
- 19 HOSANNAS (anag.)

DOWN

- 1 S(PORTS) CAR
- 2 ACCED + E (Decca rev.)
- 3 (F)IN ALL(y)
- 4 GA(R)IBALD(I)(n)
- 5 EX + A.M.
- 6 (t)HE + ADDRESS
- 8 ICE SKATES (anag.)
- 12 FLISHA (anag.)
- 14 REIGN (rein hom.)
- 16 OH(I)O

MEDICAL DISPATCH

HEART SURGERY, UNPLUGGED

Making the coronary bypass safer, cheaper, and easier.

BY JEROME GROOPMAN

IN an operating room at Boston's Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, a heart is being repaired. For the most part, the surgical team is following the standard steps of a coronary-bypass operation: the patient's breastbone is sawed through in a straight, vertical line, a steel retractor is inserted and ratcheted back to expose the chest cavity, and the bleeding edges of the incision are stanchied with an electric cautery. With each dab of the cautery, there is a tiny wisp of smoke, which dissipates, and the smell of burning flesh, which does not. Then the pericardium, a fibrous sac that encases the heart, is slit open with a scalpel, and the heart itself, pulsating and slick, is exposed to view.

Billy Cohn, the attending surgeon, peers into the chest cavity. He runs his right index finger over the surface of the pulsating ventricle until he feels a gritty atherosclerotic deposit; though he has already consulted the coronary angiograms, surgery remains a tactile endeavor. "This is where we do the bypass," he says, in a deep Texas accent. He threads a couple of white elastic strands deep into the contracting muscle, to either side of a blocked vessel. These stitches will brace the diseased artery as the bypass graft is made. Cohn is preparing to do something that until recently would have been inconceivable—operate on a beating heart.

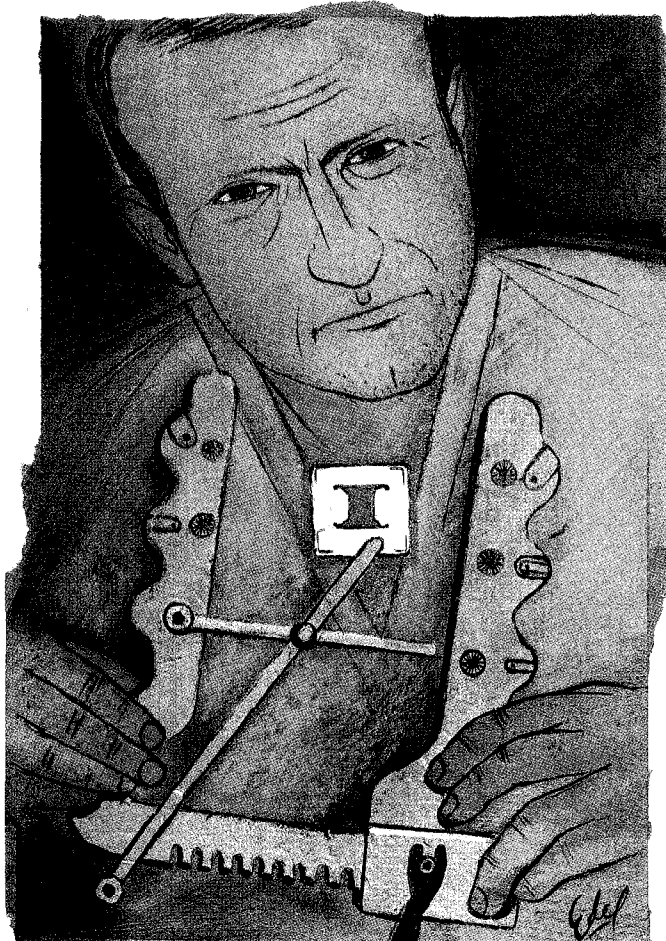
In a conventional bypass operation, the heart must be stopped for the duration, with the blood shunted into a heart-lung machine. As the name suggests, this machine has a dual function, and that's because the heart and the lungs

work as a unit. The right chamber of the heart pumps blood to the lungs, where it receives oxygen and releases carbon dioxide; the blood returns from the lungs to the left side of the heart and is then pumped out through the aorta to the tissues. So when the heart is stopped in order for it to be operated on the lungs must be stopped, too. First, the heart-lung machine is filled with an electrolyte solution, to prime the pump; once the blood starts flowing into the machine, oxygen is percolated into it through sheets of porous plastic that work as surrogate lungs. As a further safeguard, the machine cools the blood to about eighty-two degrees Fahrenheit,

so that, when the machine's forceful pump returns the cooled blood to the body, it lowers the body temperature and slows the metabolism of the tissues, lessening their need for oxygen. The heart itself is stopped by being flooded with ice-cold fluids that are rich in potassium, an ion that arrests muscle contraction. Only then does the bypass surgery proper—circumventing clogged vessels with a healthy graft—proceed. It's a complicated and laborious sequence—and one that Billy Cohn has managed to dispense with entirely.

Assisting at the operation is Ronald Weintraub, a senior surgeon and the former chief of cardiac surgery at the hospital. As Weintraub explained to me, there have been three generations of cardiac surgeons. First came the patriarchs—surgeons such as John Gibbon, at the Massachusetts General Hospital; John Kirklin, at the Mayo Clinic; Michael DeBakey, at Baylor; and C. Walton Lillehei, at the University of Minnesota. Their development of the heart-lung machine made modern open-heart surgery possible.

Unlike the other vital organs, the heart is in constant, vigorous motion. Because performing delicate surgery on a pumping heart was considered to be impossible—like cutting a gemstone while you were on horseback—the major problem had been figuring out a safe way to arrest the heart during surgery. The second generation of heart surgeons (among whom Weintraub counts himself) refined the surgical techniques, improved the heart-lung machine, and created the modern intensive-care unit to coordinate the complex medical support that the procedure required. The surgeons of Billy Cohn's generation—"the Nintendo generation," in Weintraub's phrase—are mostly in their thirties and forties, and they have made it their mission to come up with the techniques and the contraptions that will change heart surgery from a complex and expensive procedure to a simple matter of



Doctors like Billy Cohn have learned to sidestep the most hazardous part of bypass surgery: the heart-lung machine.

sawing, slicing, and sewing. They want to take the bypass operation out of intensive care.

BILLY COHN, a thirty-eight-year-old Texan with sandy-brown hair, took an unusual route to becoming a cardiac surgeon, as he explained to me over coffee in the cavernous glass-and-chrome atrium of the hospital's outpatient center a few days before the operation. Growing up in Houston, he had been a poor student in elementary and secondary school, easily distracted and easily bored. "I was like a kid with A.D.D.," he recounted with gesticulating hands and in rapid-fire speech. "But it's like with every Jewish boy—your mother wants you to be a doctor." In despair at his academic performance, his mother would leave newspaper clippings on the breakfast table about two famous home-town heart surgeons, Michael DeBakey and Denton Cooley. But Billy Cohn rarely read beyond the headlines. He wanted to be a rock star, and as an undergraduate at Oberlin he spent most of his time in a punk band playing bass guitar. "I had a wild two-tone hairdo—black with a white stripe down the middle," he told me. "I looked like a skunk." In his junior year of college, he realized he wasn't going to make it as a rock star, and decided

"to do something more" with his life. He got into Baylor Medical School, in Houston, which specializes in cardiac surgery, a field with a certain glamour of its own. In 1994, when Cohn was recruited by the Boston hospital, he set out to make his mark by figuring out a better way of doing the most common type of heart surgery, the coronary-artery bypass.

The coronary arteries—there are three principal ones—carry blood from the aorta over the surface of the heart. Their branches penetrate the heart and provide oxygen-rich blood to feed the pumping muscle. Blockage of the coronary arteries tends to occur in middle age as deposits of cholesterol, calcium, and cellular debris build up—a process called atherosclerosis. If the blockage is severe, not enough blood flows to the heart muscle, and it dies—resulting in a heart attack, or, in the medical jargon, an MI, for "myocardial infarct." Surgery to restore coronary blood flow was first performed successfully in the sixties, and it has advanced considerably in the succeeding decades. Usually, a vessel called the saphenous vein is removed from the leg and grafted onto the coronary artery to provide a detour around the atherosclerotic block. By now, heart surgeons have mastered the techniques of grafting and suturing, and for those

patients who qualify for the operation success rates are excellent—greater than ninety-five per cent.

There remain, however, serious side effects and occasional deaths, most of which result not from surgery itself but from the heart-lung machine. The problems begin as the cooled blood flows over the machine's porous membranes: when oxygen bubbles into the blood, it "roughs up" the blood cells. The white cells, which serve to protect against infection, become less effective, and the rate of postoperative infection is relatively high. The roughed-up cells also release inflammatory substances, which irritate the lungs. The blood platelets are damaged by the artificial oxygenation, too, and the patient becomes prone to bleeding. More damage is caused by small clots—composed of blood fats, proteins, platelets, and clumped red blood cells—that form around the oxygen bubbles. When these clots are infused back into the patient, they may block capillaries in sensitive tissues, like those of the brain, the retina, and the lung. Patients on the heart-lung machine have a two-to-four-per-cent risk of stroke and a twenty-five-per-cent risk of transitory retinal damage. And from thirty to fifty per cent of patients will experience a syndrome Cohn calls "pump head," in which they suffer significant cognitive deficits: memory loss, inability to concentrate, difficulties in recognizing patterns, and an inability to perform basic calculations. Although the cognitive deficits usually subside over a period of weeks or months, they may delay recovery, and some physicians suspect that they contribute to the clinical depression that often afflicts patients after heart surgery. In addition, patients retain about twenty pounds of fluid as a result of the dilution of their blood in the machine and the trauma of surgery, and this excess fluid puts a further strain on the heart and the lungs. In fact, the very sick or the elderly have been considered ineligible for bypass surgery simply because they are too fragile to withstand the rigors of the heart-lung machine. The machine also involves considerable expense. An expert technician, called a perfusionist, has to be present in the O.R. to supervise the equipment. Fluids used to preserve the stopped heart, so that the muscle is not damaged, are costly. And patients may



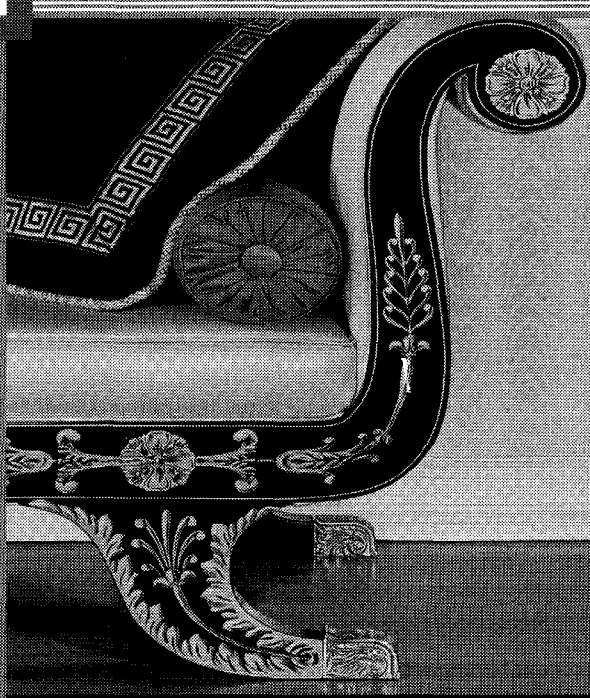
require a respirator to help them breathe for several days after the operation, and must be monitored in an intensive-care unit for as long as a week. The new generation of heart surgeons has set out to make the operation safer, cheaper, and available to just about everyone who might benefit from it.

ATTEMPTS to bypass the bypass machine started in earnest about ten years ago, when Steven Gundry, at the Loma Linda University School of Medicine, in California, devised a procedure of threading elastic bands through the heart muscle just under the diseased coronary artery to raise the vessel and allow a surgeon to cut into it even while the heart continued to pump. Though the results were promising, the artery would sometimes wiggle under the surgeon's knife, making the technique too difficult and unreliable for widespread adoption. Then, three years ago, a small group of surgeons—including Valavanur Subramanian, of the Lenox Hill Hospital, in New York, and James Fonger, then of Johns Hopkins, in Baltimore—tried again to operate on a beating heart, using a different technique. Cohn decided to look into it, and visited Johns Hopkins in March, 1996.

Instead of performing full open-heart surgery, Fonger made a small incision between the ribs, which meant that his technique could only be used for a single coronary artery on the front surface of the heart. Through the incision he passed a device that looked like a two-pronged salad fork. The forklike stabilizer would, as Cohn describes it, "ride with the heart muscle, like a cowboy on a bronco." The surgeon had to follow its undulation as he made a stabbing cut 1.5 millimetres in diameter into the single coronary artery and then sewed a series of about a dozen stitches to make the graft.

"I saw that artery filled with baklava," Billy Cohn told me, referring to the atherosclerotic sludge, "and when Dr. Fonger was able to get around it using the two-pronged tines, I said to myself, 'Hot damn, this is great!'"

Cohn began doing single-artery bypasses using the two-pronged device inserted through a small incision in the chest. The results were promising, but he found the method technically demanding. Even with the device, it was hard to stitch and insure a tight



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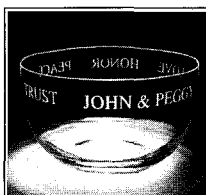
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graft. Furthermore, the approach could be used only for cases of a single diseased artery, on the front of the heart. In late April of 1996, while driving home after a trying day in the operating room, Cohn was seized by the notion that there must be a better instrument than the salad fork.

"I went straight to Stop & Shop," he told me, "and bought myself a whole bunch of soup ladles." Cohn is an amateur car mechanic and appliance repairman. In his basement, he maintains a cluttered metal shop, with vises, awls, a lathe, and a drill press. When he returned from the supermarket, he worked in his metal shop through the night, turning the soup end of the ladles into flat surfaces at different angles to the handle, and cutting a square hole into them. By holding the long handle, he figured, he might be able to press the flattened end against the diseased coronary artery and operate through a cutout window.

"After a few hours, I had something I thought might work," Cohn recalled. He arrived early at the hospital the next morning and immediately went to the large animal lab. His prototypes were tried on dogs, pigs, and sheep. But he was not satisfied; there was still movement from the heart muscle. He returned to Stop & Shop for soup spoons and different kinds of ladles. After several attempts, he had something that worked well enough on animals to be tried on a human being.

As we sat together at the outpatient center, Cohn arrayed a series of long metal ladles on the table next to my coffee cup. Each handle ended not in the concave belly of a spoon but in a metal rectangle with a central window in it the size of a small postage stamp. Despite Ron Weintraub's talk of a Nintendo generation, Cohn's innovation was largely a matter of old-fashioned industrial arts.

In December of 1996, a patient gave Cohn his "informed consent" to be operated upon with a homemade instrument that had previously been tried only on animals. "There I was, in the operating room, trying it on the first human," Cohn told me. "And it was gorgeous."

Cohn began to use his modified ladles for all the off-pump cases, which had previously depended on the two-tined stabilizer—bypasses involving a

SAMURAI SONG

When I had no roof I made
Audacity my roof. When I had
No supper my eyes dined.

When I had no eyes I listened.
When I had no ears I thought.
When I had no thought I waited.

When I had no father I made
Care my father. When I had no
Mother I embraced order.

When I had no friend I made
Quiet my friend. When I had no
Enemy I opposed my body.

When I had no temple I made
My voice my temple. I have
No priest, my tongue is my
choir.

When I have no means fortune
Is my means. When I have
Nothing, death will be my
fortune.

Need is my tactic, detachment
Is my strategy. When I had
No lover I courted my sleep.

—ROBERT PINSKY

single artery on the front of the heart. Catheterization studies were conducted after each surgery: dye was injected into the repaired arteries to make sure that the grafted detours were open and functioning. And at the end of every week Cohn returned to his basement metal shop to modify yet another ladle. "After eight months, I was happy with my last spoon," he said. Soon he was confident enough to operate on patients with several blocked coronary arteries—classical "open-heart surgery," where the breastbone is split to expose all the surfaces of the beating heart.

In mid-1997, a Cambridge-based company, Genzyme Surgical Products, became interested in the device. Billy Cohn had done a 3-D computer rendering of how it worked, and he gave his computer disk to executives of the company. He also invited them to observe how the stabilizer performed in the animal lab and in the O.R. The company decided to create a mold for a commercial model. The prototype used a long metal rod in place of the spoon's handle. A firm plastic polymer was used to create the rectangular platform, and it was given a textured surface to help it grip the surface of the heart. The prototype was sent for testing to hospitals throughout the country, and surgeons who tried it responded enthusiastically. Sixty medical centers in the United States have now adopted the device.

The creation of the Cohn Cardiac Stabilizer (surgeons traditionally name their devices after themselves) was only

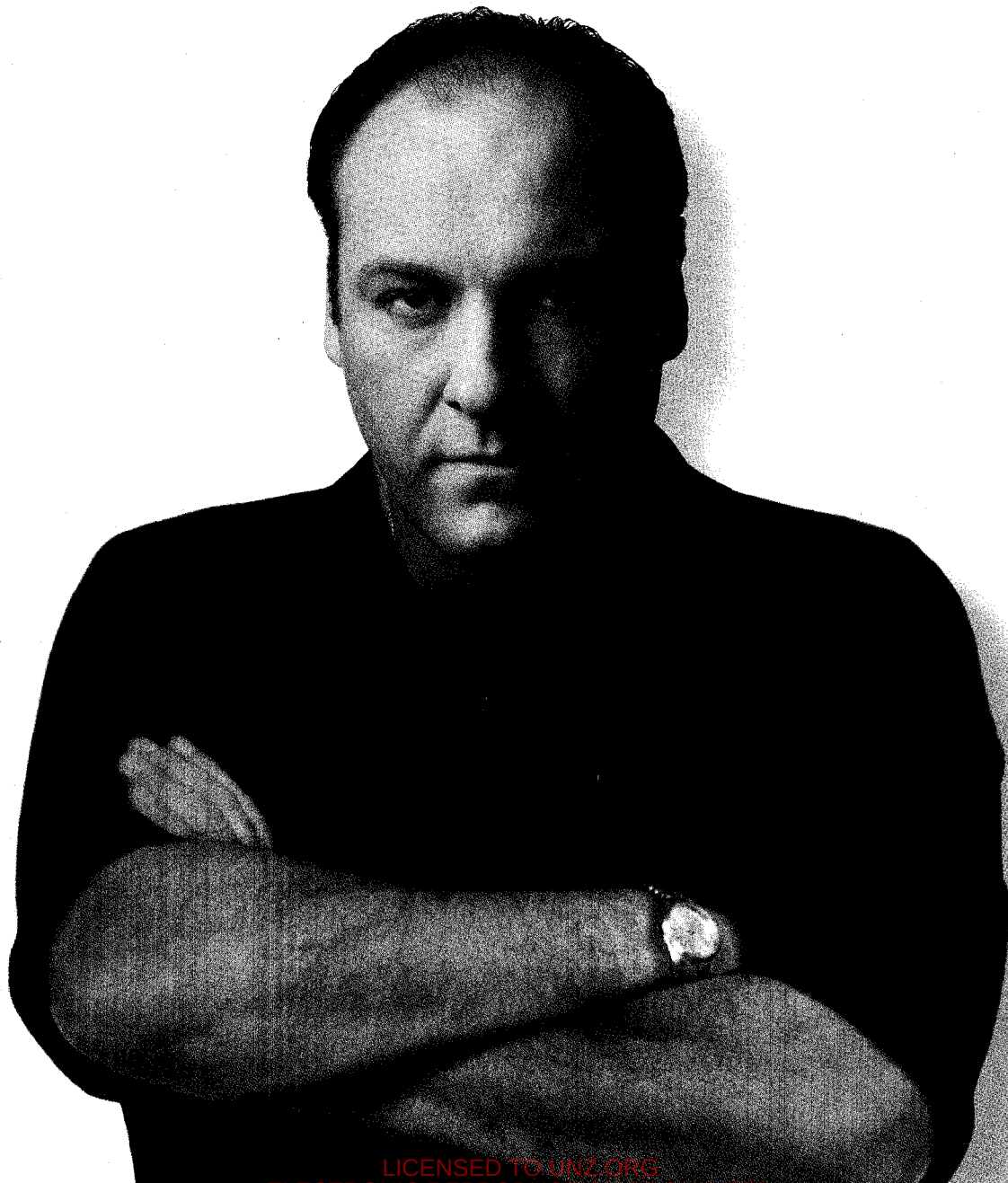
part of the growing effort to change the character of open-heart surgery. Among the Cohn stabilizer's competitors is an advanced version of the two-tined fork called an "octopus," which uses tentacles fitted with a series of suckers that grip the heart muscle with a vacuum seal. Not surprisingly, there is intense rivalry among cardiac surgeons about the superiority of their own approaches. Nonsurgical efforts to deal with atherosclerosis are also being explored, such as injecting growth-promoting proteins into the sick coronaries to try to trigger the development of collateral vessels. Unfortunately, it can take months for collateral vessels to grow, and there's still no way to insure that new vessel growth will deliver blood where it's needed. So most serious heart problems remain in the hands of surgeons.

"LOOK at this heart beating happily," Billy Cohn says to his team in the operating room. Ron Weintraub mounts a long metal rod on a steel retractor that clamps on either side of the gaping chest cavity, and he lowers it to just millimetres above the beating heart, then fixes it in place by tightening a knob on the retractor. Now Cohn takes a plastic stabilizer and connects it to the bottom of the rod, deftly adjusting its rectangular aperture so that it sits over the atherosclerotic artery. He checks that the two bracing sutures he had earlier passed through the heart muscle are tight under the diseased artery. Then he ties them around the plastic rectangle, fastening it

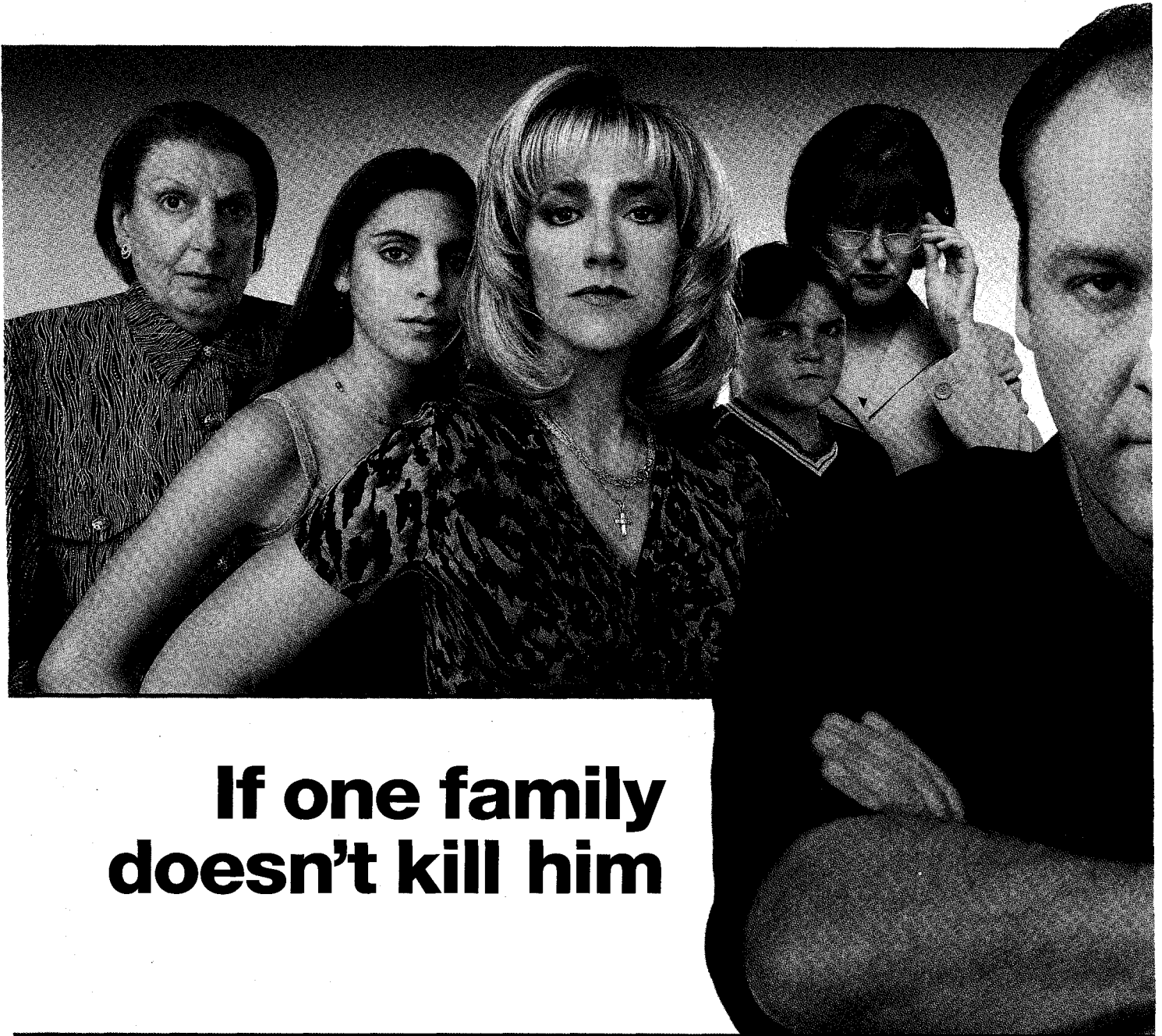
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firmly onto the surface of the heart. The rod is now anchored rigidly to the retractor, and helps keep the plastic stabilizer immobile. Even as the rest of the heart thrashes away in the exposed cavity, the Cohn stabilizer has grabbed on to one small area and is holding it steady.

Cohn stops to glance at the cardiac monitor. "Look at how well he's doing," he says. The monitor indicates a blood pressure of 138/75, a heart rate of 50, and a robust cardiac output of 5.5 litres. But the cardiogram is flat. "We lose the EKG when the heart is lifted and manipulated outside the chest," Cohn goes on. "But we're not really flying blind, because of the vital signs—blood pressure, heart rate, cardiac output. They're rock stable, just as that ol' heart keeps beating away."

The nurse shows Cohn a segment of the saphenous vein that was dissected from the man's left leg. "Man, that is one beautiful vein—a blue-plate special," Cohn observes. He slowly moves his right hand, guiding a sharp knife he calls "the stabber" to the spot that he identified earlier with his index finger, and punctures the diseased coronary artery. There's a burst of bright-red arterial blood and Cohn tightens the sutures so that the stabilizer presses down as a tourniquet and stops the flow; he will be finished before the impeded flow can cause any damage to the heart muscle.

"We can readily sew to that," he says, pointing to the artery that protrudes from the window of the plastic stabilizer. The saphenous vein—marked with blue stripes to make sure that it isn't twisted—dangles like a painted earthworm as Weintraub lowers it onto the stabilizer. The nurse adjusts seven beams of light overhead so that they converge on the operative field. Working through magnifying loupes like those used by a jeweller, Cohn begins to suture one end of the saphenous vein to the hole he has just made in the coronary artery. The needle and the thread, as thin as a single hair, are hardly visible.

"See how stable it is?" Cohn asks. "I get to pick my stitches and see if I like them."

The thick, striated fibres of the rest of the heart pulsate, its glistening surface moving within an inch of Cohn's

sewing hand, but he takes no notice of it. After about fifteen minutes, the vein is fully sewn, "heel to toe."

"That's it," Weintraub announces. He removes the two sutures that anchor the plastic stabilizer to the heart, and the grafted vein is visibly pulsing and filled with arterial blood. "Billy's a third of the way there," Weintraub adds. That is, two more vessels are blocked and will need to be bypassed. I was invited to observe this operation because it's a particularly difficult one: the patient, a sixty-two-year-old retired gardener from the suburbs, has *situs inversus*, a congenital condition in which the organs are arranged in mirror image, so that his heart sits in the right side of his chest rather than the left.

"I didn't have to switch my hands or use mirrors to do this case, now, did I?" Cohn asks, looking pleased. "I only needed to flip my brain right to left." For a moment, he stands back and views his work with unabashed satisfaction. I move behind a sterile barrier and observe the patient's face. It is peaceful and ruddy, as if he were napping. The lead surgeon chooses the music in the operating room. Ron Weintraub always plays classical, but Billy Cohn has a rock station on. Even the fevered wail of the singer doesn't diminish the controlled calm in the room.

Cohn runs his gloved index finger along the second coronary, verifying where its obstruction lies and where another segment of the saphenous vein will have to be grafted around it. The rod and stabilizer are swivelled over the site. Cohn makes the stabbing cut and then works with steady strokes, but after completing half of the connection he decides that the last stitch wasn't quite what he wanted. "When in doubt, take it out," he announces, in his distinctive drawl. Every few minutes, he glances at the cardiac monitor to check that the blood pressure, the heart rate, and the cardiac output are stable. By noon, the operation is over. Three diseased coronary arteries, including one on the underside of the heart, have been bypassed.

BILLY COHN has achieved outstanding results using his stabilizer, but such results are not restricted to the inventor or to his own device. At a conference on "minimally invasive cardiac surgery" held



in New Orleans in January just a year ago, Valavanur Subramanian reported on over a thousand patients who had had off-pump bypass surgery performed with a variety of instruments. More than ninety-five per cent of the grafts functioned, and there were significantly fewer complications than there were with traditional heart-lung bypasses. These patients had a smaller incidence of respiratory dysfunction, stroke, retinal bleeding, cognitive problems, and wound infection. The savings in expense were striking, too. The University of Pittsburgh reported that the average postsurgical length of stay was 2.5 days among two hundred patients done off-pump compared with a six-day length of stay for pump patients. The average cost of an off-pump operation was less than thirteen thousand dollars; the comparable bypass was more than twenty-one thousand dollars. (In addition to obviating the need for the heart-lung machine and the perfusionist, off-pump operations required less I.C.U. time and fewer blood tests, as well as the shorter hospital stay all told.) Robert Marquis, a senior perfusionist who operates the heart-lung machine at the Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, told me, "Billy Cohn may put me out of business for coronary surgery. But it's O.K. when you see the difference for the patient."

Several hours after the operation, I visited the gardener, and found him propped up in bed, talking with his family. I began to review the course that brought him to surgery. "It was in 1987 that you had the first symptoms," I said. He politely corrected me: the first symptoms actually occurred in the late summer of 1986. He then recounted in great detail the two heart attacks that had forced him to give up heavy outdoor labor around his town. It turned out that I had lived in the same working-class suburb some four years earlier. We talked about the local geography, and he confirmed my memory of intersecting streets and told me which shops had survived the invasion of large national chains.

"Incredible, isn't it?" Philip Devine, the surgical-I.C.U. fellow, observed later. "He has no pump head at all. These guys come up after beating-heart surgery as clear as a bell. No fluid overload, and platelets O.K., white cells happy." Devine said he expected that the gardener would be up and walking

some twelve hours after surgery and sent home within three days.

The next day, Billy Cohn, with hand-tooled black-leather cowboy boots and a broad gait, strutted through the hospital's outpatient center to meet me and talk about the case. He had done two more off-pump cases since the gardener's. I remarked on how smoothly that one went.

"You can get a precision stitch, same as when the heart is stopped," he said, and then he cautioned that there is "a learning curve" for all heart surgeons. "We are like craftsmen in a medieval guild. Everyone begins as an apprentice, learning for years from a master each detail of the art—down to the exact style of his stitch." As Cohn acknowledges, most older coronary-artery surgeons are unlikely to give up the heart-lung machine. It's hard for them to master a whole new technique. Besides, the results of most standard bypass operations are excellent. Nor has there been any long-term follow-up on the beneficiaries of off-pump surgery. But each month about a dozen younger cardiac surgeons from around the country come to Boston to learn from Billy Cohn. Using pigs, he instructs them in the manipulation of the customized metal retractor, the adjustable rod, and the plastic stabilizer. About a hundred heart surgeons have been trained so far.

Unlike the heart-lung machine, the stabilizer Cohn devised is no technological marvel; it's just an unprepossessing piece of plastic. A number of the young surgeons are undoubtedly wondering whether they can't design a better one. And Cohn freely admits that "the jury is still out" on which instruments will ultimately prevail, and that although he is "happy" with his stabilizer, he thinks there is room for improvement. "Generation Two is being tooled in my basement, Generation Three is on the computer, and Generation Four is in the back of my head," he says. But he's certain that a change in the default method of heart surgery is just a matter of time. "To stop the heart in order to sew on its outside—and that is where the coronary arteries are, right smack on the surface—is simply barbaric," he says. "You'll see. Over the next decade, nearly all coronary surgery will be done on a beating heart. I want to make it so anybody who can throw a stitch can do it." ♦

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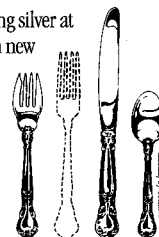
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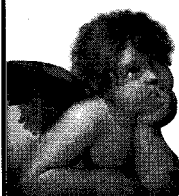
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SIX DEGREES OF LOIS WEISBERG

She's a grandmother, she lives in a big house in Chicago, and you've never heard of her. Does she run the world?

BY MALCOLM GLADWELL

EVERYONE who knows Lois Weisberg has a story about meeting Lois Weisberg, and although she has done thousands of things in her life and met thousands of people, all the stories are pretty much the same. Lois (everyone calls her Lois) is invariably smoking a cigarette and drinking one of her dozen or so daily cups of coffee. She will have been up until two or three the previous morning, and up again at seven or seven-thirty, because she hardly seems to sleep. In some accounts—particularly if the meeting took place in the winter—she'll be wearing her white, fur-topped Dr. Zhivago boots with gold tights; but she may have on her platform tennis shoes, or the leather jacket with the little studs on it, or maybe an outrageous piece of costume jewelry, and, always, those huge, rhinestone-studded glasses that make her big eyes look positively enormous. "I have no idea why I asked you to come here, I have no job for you," Lois told Wendy Willrich when Willrich went to Lois's office in downtown Chicago a few years ago for an interview. But by the end of the interview Lois did have a job for her, because for Lois meeting someone is never just about meeting someone. If she likes you, she wants to recruit you into one of her grand schemes—to sweep you up into her world. A while back, Lois called up Helen Doria, who was then working for someone on Chicago's city council, and said, "I don't have a job for you. Well, I might have a little job. I need someone to come over and help me clean up my office." By this, she meant that she had a big job for Helen but just didn't know what it was yet. Helen came, and, sure enough, Lois got her a big job.

Cindy Mitchell first met Lois twenty-three years ago, when she bundled up her baby and ran outside into one of those frigid Chicago winter mornings because some people from the Chicago Park District were about to cart away a

beautiful sculpture of Carl von Linné from the park across the street. Lois happened to be driving by at the time, and, seeing all the commotion, she slammed on her brakes, charged out of her car—all five feet of her—and began asking Cindy questions, rat-a-tat-tat: "Who are you? What's going on here? Why do you care?" By the next morning, Lois had persuaded two Chicago *Tribune* reporters to interview Cindy and turn the whole incident into a cause célèbre, and she had recruited Cindy to join an organization she'd just started called Friends of the Parks, and then, when she found out that Cindy was a young mother at home who was too new in town to have many friends, she told her, "I've found a friend for you. Her name is Helen, and she has a little boy your kid's age, and you will meet her next week and the two of you will be best friends." That's exactly what happened, and, what's more, Cindy went on to spend ten years as president of Friends of the Park. "Almost everything that I do today and eighty to ninety per cent of my friends came about because of her, because of that one little chance meeting," Cindy says. "That's a scary thing. Try to imagine what would have happened if she had come by five minutes earlier."

It could be argued, of course, that even if Cindy hadn't met Lois on the street twenty-three years ago she would have met her somewhere else, maybe a year later or two years later or ten years later, or, at least, she would have met someone who knew Lois or would have met someone who knew someone who knew Lois, since Lois Weisberg is connected, by a very short chain, to nearly everyone. Weisberg is now the Commissioner of Cultural Affairs for the City of Chicago. But in the course of her seventy-three years she has hung out with actors and musicians and doctors and lawyers and politicians and activists and environmentalists, and once,

on a whim, she opened a secondhand-jewelry store named for her granddaughter Becky Fyffe, and every step of the way Lois has made friends and recruited people, and a great many of those people have stayed with her to this day. "When we were doing the jazz festival, it turned out—surprise, surprise—that she was buddies with Dizzy Gillespie," one of her friends recalls. "This is a woman who cannot carry a tune. She has no sense of rhythm. One night Tony Bennett was in town, and so we hang out with Tony Bennett, hearing about the old days with him and Lois."

Once, in the mid-fifties, on a whim, Lois took the train to New York to attend the World Science Fiction Convention and there she met a young writer by the name of Arthur C. Clarke. Clarke took a shine to Lois, and next time he was in Chicago he called her up. "He was at a pay phone," Lois recalls. "He said, 'Is there anyone in Chicago I should meet?' I told him to come over to my house." Lois has a throaty voice, baked hard by half a century of nicotine, and she pauses between sentences to give herself the opportunity for a quick puff. Even when she's not smoking, she pauses anyway, as if to keep in practice. "I called Bob Hughes, one of the people who wrote for my paper." Pause. "I said, 'Do you know anyone in Chicago interested in talking to Arthur Clarke?' He said, 'Yeah, Isaac Asimov is in town. And this guy Robert, Robert... Robert Heinlein.' So they all came over and sat in my study." Pause. "Then they called over to me and they said, 'Lois'—I can't remember the word they used. They had some word for me. It was something about how I was the kind of person who brings people together."

This is in some ways the archetypal Lois Weisberg story. First, she reaches out to somebody—somebody outside her world. (At the time, she was running a drama troupe, whereas Arthur C. Clarke wrote science fiction.) Equally

ROBERT RISCO



People like Lois Weisberg stand at the intersection of different worlds, connecting people, creating opportunities, and spreading ideas.

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"At this time, the family is grieving and suing."

important, that person responds to her. Then there's the fact that when Arthur Clarke came to Chicago and wanted to meet someone Lois came up with Isaac Asimov. She says it was a fluke that Asimov was in town. But if it hadn't been Asimov it would have been someone else. Lois ran a salon out of her house on the North Side in the late nineteen-fifties, and one of the things that people remember about it is that it was always, effortlessly, integrated. Without that salon, blacks would still have socialized with whites on the North Side—though it was rare back then, it happened. But it didn't happen by accident: it happened because a certain kind of person made it happen. That's what Asimov and Clarke meant when they said that Lois has this thing—whatever it is—that brings people together.

LOIS is a type—a particularly rare and extraordinary type, but a type nonetheless. She's the type of person who seems to know everybody, and this type can be found in every walk of life.

Someone I met at a wedding (actually, the wedding of the daughter of Lois's neighbors, the Newbergers) told me that if I ever went to Massapequa I should look up a woman named Marsha, because Marsha was the type of person who knew everybody. In Cambridge, Massachusetts, the word is that a tailor named Charlie Davidson knows everybody. In Houston, I'm told, there is an attorney named Harry Reasoner who knows everybody. There are probably Lois Weisbergs in Akron and Tucson and Paris and in some little town in the Yukon Territory, up by the Arctic Circle. We've all met someone like Lois Weisberg. Yet, although we all know a Lois Weisberg type, we don't know much *about* the Lois Weisberg type. Why is it, for example, that these few, select people seem to know everyone and the rest of us don't? And how important are the people who know everyone? This second question is critical, because once you begin even a cursory examination of the life of someone like Lois Weisberg you start to suspect that

he or she may be far more important than we would ever have imagined—that the people who know everyone, in some oblique way, may actually run the world. I don't mean that they are the sort who head up the Fed or General Motors or Microsoft, but that, in a very down-to-earth, day-to-day way, they make the world work. They spread ideas and information. They connect varied and isolated parts of society. Helen Doria says someone high up in the Chicago government told her that Lois is "the epicenter of the city administration," which is the right way to put it. Lois is far from being the most important or the most powerful person in Chicago. But if you connect all the dots that constitute the vast apparatus of government and influence and interest groups in the city of Chicago you'll end up coming back to Lois again and again. Lois is a connector.

Lois, it must be said, did not set out to know everyone. "She doesn't network for the sake of networking," says Gary Johnson, who was Lois's boss years ago, when she was executive director of the Chicago Council of Lawyers. "I just think she has the confidence that all the people in the world, whether she's met them or not, are in her Rolodex already, and that all she has to do is figure out how to reach them and she'll be able to connect with them."

Nor is Lois charismatic—at least, not in the way that we think of extroverts and public figures as being charismatic. She doesn't fill a room; eyes don't swivel toward her as she makes her entrance. Lois has frizzy blond hair, and when she's thinking—between her coffee and her cigarette—she kneads the hair on the top of her head, so that by the end of a particularly difficult meeting it will be standing almost straight up. "She's not like the image of the Washington society doyenne," Gary Johnson says. "You know, one of those people who identify you, take you to lunch, give you the treatment. Her social life is very different. When I bump into her and she says, 'Oh, we should catch up,' what she means is that someday I should go with her to her office, and we'd go down to the snack bar and buy a muffin and then sit in her office while she answered the

phone. For a real treat, when I worked with her at the Council of Lawyers she would take me to the dining room in the Wieboldt's department store." Johnson is an old-school Chicago intellectual who works at a fancy law firm and has a corner office with one of those Midwestern views in which, if you look hard enough, you can almost see Nebraska, and the memory of those lunches at Wieboldt's seems to fill him with delight. "Now, you've got to understand that the Wieboldt's department store—which doesn't exist anymore—was a notch below Field's, where the suburban society ladies have their lunch, and it's also a notch below Carson's," he says. "There was a kind of room there where people who bring their own string bags to go shopping would have a quick lunch. This was her idea of a lunch out. We're not talking Pamela Harriman here."

In the mid-eighties, Lois quit a job she'd had for four years, as director of special events in the administration of Harold Washington, and somehow hooked up with a group of itinerant peddlers who ran the city's flea markets. "There was this lady who sold jewelry," Lois said. "She was a person out of Dickens. She was bedraggled. She had a houseful of cats. But she knew how to buy jewelry, and I wanted her to teach me. I met her whole circle of friends, all these old gay men who had antique stores. Once a week, we would go to the Salvation Army." Lois was arguably the most important civic activist in the city. Her husband was a judge. She lived in a huge house in one of Chicago's nicest neighborhoods. Yet somehow she managed to be plausible as a flea-market peddler to a bunch of flea-market peddlers, the same way she managed to be plausible as a music lover to a musician like Tony Bennett. It doesn't matter who she's with or what she's doing; she always manages to be in the thick of things. "There was a woman I knew—Sandra—who had a kid in school with my son Joseph," Lois told me. Lois has a habit of telling stories that appear to be tangential and digressive but, on reflection, turn out to be parables of a sort. "She helped all these Asians living uptown. One day, she came over here and said there was this young Chinese man who wanted to meet an American family and learn to speak English better and was willing to cook for his room

and board. Well, I'm always eager to have a cook, and especially a Chinese cook, because my family loves Chinese food. They could eat it seven days a week. So Sandra brought this man over here. His name was Shi Young. He was a graduate student at the Art Institute of Chicago." Shi Young lived with Lois and her family for two years, and during that time Chicago was in the midst of political turmoil. Harold Washington, who would later become the first black mayor of the city, was attempting to unseat the remains of the Daley political machine, and Lois's house, naturally, was the site of late-night, top-secret strategy sessions for the pro-Washington reformers of Chicago's North Side. "We'd have all these important people here, and Shi Young would come down and listen," Lois recalls. "I didn't think anything of it." But Shi Young, as it turns out, was going back up to his room and writing up what he heard for the *China Youth Daily*, a newspaper with a circulation in the tens of millions. Somehow, in the improbable way that the world works, a portal was opened up, connecting Chicago's North Side reform politics and the readers of the *China Youth Daily*, and that link was Lois's living

room. You could argue that this was just a fluke—just as it was a fluke that Isaac Asimov was in town and that Lois happened to be driving by when Cindy Mitchell came running out of her apartment. But sooner or later all those flukes begin to form a pattern.

IN the late nineteen-sixties, a Harvard social psychologist named Stanley Milgram conducted an experiment in an effort to find an answer to what is known as the small-world problem, though it could also be called the Lois Weisberg problem. It is this: How are human beings connected? Do we belong to separate worlds, operating simultaneously but autonomously, so that the links between any two people, anywhere in the world, are few and distant? Or are we all bound up together in a grand, interlocking web? Milgram's idea was to test this question with a chain letter. For one experiment, he got the names of a hundred and sixty people, at random, who lived in Omaha, Nebraska, and he mailed each of them a packet. In the packet was the name and address of a stockbroker who worked in Boston and lived in Sharon, Massachusetts. Each person was instructed to



"You always get to be the therapist! I never get to be the therapist!"

write his name on a roster in the packet and send it on to a friend or acquaintance who he thought would get it closer to the stockbroker. The idea was that when the letters finally arrived at the stockbroker's house Milgram could look at the roster of names and establish how closely connected someone chosen at random from one part of the country was to another person chosen at random in another part. Milgram found that most of the letters reached the stockbroker in five or six steps. It is from this experiment that we got the concept of six degrees of separation.

That phrase is now so familiar that it is easy to lose sight of how surprising Milgram's finding was. Most of us don't have particularly diverse groups of friends. In one well-known study, two psychologists asked people living in the Dyckman public-housing project, in uptown Manhattan, about their closest friend in the project; almost ninety per cent of the friends lived in the same building, and half lived on the same floor. In general, people chose friends of similar age and race. But if the friend lived down the hall, both age and race became a lot less important. Proximity overpowered similarity. Another study, involving students at the University of Utah, found that if you ask someone why he is friendly with someone else he'll say that it is because they share similar attitudes. But if you actually quiz the pairs of students on their attitudes you'll find out that this is an illusion, and that what friends really tend to have in common are activities. We're friends with the people we do things with, not necessarily with the people we resemble. We don't seek out friends; we simply associate with the people who occupy the same physical places that we do: People in Omaha are not, as a rule, friends with people who live in Sharon, Massachusetts. So how did the packets get halfway across the country in just five steps? "When I asked an intelligent friend of mine how many steps he thought it would take, he estimated that it would require 100 intermediate persons or more to move from Nebraska to Sharon," Milgram wrote. "Many people make somewhat similar estimates, and are surprised to learn that only five intermediaries will—on the average—suffice. Somehow it does not accord with intuition."

The explanation is that in the six de-

HARD LIVES

It was foggy and frosty, not a night to be out,
and there was no one in the village street,
and nothing moved ahead on the lane
that led between Stocking Farm and larch plantation.
Grass on the verges stared like the fur of some Arctic animal;
the fog came up like a wall at eye level
but sagged around us like curtains.
We drove right through it. After all, it was easy,
this getting home in winter, we could give lessons

up to the second when deer shot over the headlight tunnel
in the arc of the wipers: left to right funnelled
leaping gray creatures with delicate wet black
eyes and muzzles—and we cried out in shock
that thinned into pleasure because they were free of
the world, and their lives were apart, and their exit as soft
as bolt after bolt of silk tossed to the floor
of the wood and unravelled. The way ahead was wretchedly bare,
potholed macadam going uphill between fences.

grees of separation not all degrees are equal. When Milgram analyzed his experiments, for example, he found that many of the chains reaching to Sharon followed the same asymmetrical pattern. Twenty-four packets reached the stockbroker at his home, in Sharon, and sixteen of those were given to him by the same person, a clothing merchant whom Milgram calls Mr. Jacobs. The rest of the packets were sent to the stockbroker at his office, and of those the majority came through just two men, whom Milgram calls Mr. Brown and Mr. Jones. In all, half of the responses that got to the stockbroker were delivered to him by these three people. Think of it. Dozens of people, chosen at random from a large Midwestern city, sent out packets independently. Some went through college acquaintances. Some sent their packets to relatives. Some sent them to old workmates. Yet in the end, when all those idiosyncratic chains were completed, half of the packets passed through the hands of Jacobs, Jones, and Brown. Six degrees of separation doesn't simply mean that everyone is linked to everyone else in just six steps. It means that a very small number of people are linked to everyone else in a few steps, and the rest of us are linked to the world through those few.

There's an easy way to explore this idea. Suppose that you made a list of forty people whom you would call your

circle of friends (not including family members or co-workers), and you worked backward from each person until you could identify who was ultimately responsible for setting in motion the series of connections which led to that friendship. I met my oldest friend, Bruce, for example, in first grade, so I'm the responsible party. That's easy. I met my college friend Nigel because he lived down the hall in the dormitory from Tom, whom I had met because in my freshman year he invited me to play touch football. Tom, then, is responsible for Nigel. Once you've made all the connections, you will find the same names coming up again and again. I met my friend Amy when she and her friend Katie came to a restaurant where I was having dinner. I know Katie because she is best friends with my friend Larissa, whom I know because I was told to look her up by a mutual friend, Mike A., whom I know because he went to school with another friend of mine, Mike H., who used to work at a political weekly with my friend Jacob. No Jacob, no Amy. Similarly, I met my friend Sarah S. at a birthday party a year ago because she was there with a writer named David, who was there at the invitation of his agent, Tina, whom I met through my friend Leslie, whom I know because her sister Nina is best friends with my friend Ann, whom I met through my old roommate Maura, who

We'd stopped with a jolt. As we re-started, as
 I shifted the gears one by one, as we lost
 the fog, climbing, we saw the measure of frost
 stretched over the open field,
 the empty barren January field.
 (But we'd be home before we questioned anything.)
 Red eyes in the headlights, shiftings, pale flickerings:
 those were just sheep—solid wool bodies, imbecile faces,
 mouths crammed with hay (plenty more hay strewn on the grass).

It was only days later it hit me how false
 perception had been, and how misery—what else?—
 drew the roe deer from the wood: so famished
 they'd fed with the farmer's sheep, so vulnerable they fled
 at the crunch of the car; and more, the world we despised
 was open for them to take refuge in
 as it wasn't for us, who weren't secretive, or starving.

—MAIRI MACINNES

was my roommate because she had worked with a writer named Sarah L., who was a college friend of my friend Jacob. No Jacob, no Sarah S. In fact, when I go down my list of forty friends, thirty of them, in one way or another, lead back to Jacob. My social circle is really not a circle but an inverted pyramid. And the capstone of the pyramid is a single person, Jacob, who is responsible for an overwhelming majority of my relationships. Jacob's full name, incidentally, is Jacob Weisberg. He is Lois Weisberg's son.

This isn't to say, though, that Jacob is just like Lois. Jacob may be the capstone of my pyramid, but Lois is the capstone of lots and lots of people's pyramids, and that makes her social role different. In Milgram's experiment, Mr. Jacobs the clothing merchant was the person to go through to get to the stockbroker. Lois is the kind of person you would use to get to the stockbrokers of Sharon and also the cabaret singers of Sharon and the barkeeps of Sharon and the guy who gave up a thriving career in orthodontics to open a small vegetarian falafel hut.

THERE is another way to look at this question, and that's through the popular parlor game Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon. The idea behind the game is to try to link in fewer than six steps any actor or actress, through the movies

they've been in, to the actor Kevin Bacon. For example, O. J. Simpson was in "Naked Gun" with Priscilla Presley, who was in "The Adventures of Ford Fairlane" with Gilbert Gottfried, who was in "Beverly Hills Cop II" with Paul Reiser, who was in "Diner" with Kevin Bacon. That's four steps. Mary Pickford was in "Screen Snapshots" with Clark Gable, who was in "Combat America" with Tony Romano, who, thirty-five years later, was in "Starting Over" with Bacon. That's three steps. What's funny about the game is that Bacon, although he is a fairly young actor, has already been in so many movies with so many people that there is almost no one to whom he can't be easily connected. Recently, a computer scientist at the University of Virginia by the name of Brett Tjaden actually sat down and figured out what the average degree of connectedness is for the quarter million or so actors and actresses listed in the Internet Movie Database: he came up with 2.8312 steps. That sounds impressive, except that Tjaden then went back and performed an even more heroic calculation, figuring out what the average degree of connectedness was for *everyone* in the database. Bacon, it turns out, ranks only six hundred and sixty-eighth. Martin Sheen, by contrast, can be connected, on average, to every other actor, in 2.63681 steps, which puts him almost six hundred and fifty places higher than

Bacon. Elliott Gould can be connected even more quickly, in 2.63601. Among the top fifteen are people like Robert Mitchum, Gene Hackman, Donald Sutherland, Rod Steiger, Shelley Winters, and Burgess Meredith.

Why is Kevin Bacon so far behind these actors? Recently, in the journal *Nature*, the mathematicians Duncan Watts and Steven Strogatz published a dazzling theoretical explanation of connectedness, but a simpler way to understand this question is to look at who Bacon is. Obviously, he is a lot younger than the people at the top of the list are and has made fewer movies. But that accounts for only some of the difference. A top-twenty person, like Burgess Meredith, made a hundred and fourteen movies in the course of his career. Gary Cooper, though, starred in about the same number of films and ranks only eight hundred and seventy-eighth, with a 2.85075 score. John Wayne made a hundred and eighty-three movies in his fifty-year career and still ranks only a hundred and sixteenth, at 2.7173. What sets someone like Meredith apart is his range. More than half of John Wayne's movies were Westerns, and that means he made the same kind of movie with the same kind of actors over and over again. Burgess Meredith, by contrast, was in great movies, like the Oscar-winning "Of Mice and Men" (1939), and in dreadful movies, like "Beware! The Blob" (1972). He was nominated for an Oscar for his role in "The Day of the Locust" and also made TV commercials for Skippy peanut butter. He was in four "Rocky" movies, and also played Don Learo in Godard's "King Lear." He was in schlocky made-for-TV movies, in B movies that pretty much went straight to video, and in pictures considered modern classics. He was in forty-two dramas, twenty-two comedies, eight adventure films, seven action films, five sci-fi films, five horror flicks, five Westerns, five documentaries, four crime movies, four thrillers, three war movies, three films noir, two children's films, two romances, two mysteries, one musical, and one animated film. Burgess Meredith was the kind of actor who was connected to everyone because he managed to move up and down and back and forth among all the different worlds and subcultures that the acting profession has to offer. When we say, then, that Lois Weisberg is the kind

of person who “knows everyone,” we mean it in precisely this way. It is not merely that she knows lots of people. It is that she belongs to lots of different worlds.

In the nineteen-fifties, Lois started her drama troupe in Chicago. The daughter of a prominent attorney, she was then in her twenties, living in one of the suburbs north of the city with two small children. In 1956, she decided to stage a festival to mark the centenary of George Bernard Shaw's birth. She hit up the reclusive billionaire John D. MacArthur for money. (“I go to the Pump Room for lunch. Booth One. There is a man, lurking around a pillar, with a cowboy hat and dirty, dusty boots. It's him.”) She invited William Saroyan and Norman Thomas to speak on Shaw's legacy; she put on Shaw plays in theatres around the city; and she got written up in *Life*. She then began putting out a newspaper devoted to Shaw, which mutated into an underground alternative weekly called the *Paper*. By then, Lois was living in a big house on Chicago's near North Side, and on Friday nights people from the *Paper* gathered there for editorial meetings. William Friedkin, who went on to direct “The French Connection” and “The Exorcist,” was a regular, and so were the attorney Elmer Gertz (who won parole for Nathan Leopold) and some of the editors from *Playboy*, which was just up the street. People like Art Farmer and Thelonious Monk and Dizzy Gillespie and Lenny Bruce would stop by when they were in town. Bruce actually lived in Lois's house for a while. “My mother was hysterical about it, especially one day when she rang the doorbell and he answered in a bath towel,” Lois told me. “We had a window on the porch, and he didn't have a key, so the window was always left open for him. There were a lot of rooms in that house, and a lot of people stayed there and I didn't know they were there.” Pause. Puff. “I never could stand his jokes. I didn't really like his act. I couldn't stand all the words he was using.”

Lois's first marriage—to a drugstore owner named Leonard Solomon—was breaking up around this time, so she took a job doing public relations for an injury-rehabilitation institute. From there, she went to work for a public-interest law firm called B.P.I., and while she was at B.P.I. she became concerned about the fact that Chicago's parks were

neglected and crumbling, so she gathered together a motley collection of nature lovers, historians, civic activists, and housewives, and founded the lobbying group Friends of the Parks. Then she became alarmed on discovering that a commuter railroad that ran along the south shore of Lake Michigan—from South Bend to Chicago—was about to shut down, so she gathered together a motley collection of railroad enthusiasts and environmentalists and commuters, and founded South Shore Recreation, thereby saving the railroad. Lois loved the railroad buffs. “They were all good friends of mine,” she says. “They all wrote to me. They came from California. They came from everywhere. We had meetings. They were really interesting. I came this close”—and here she held her index finger half an inch above her thumb—“to becoming one of them.” Instead, though, she became the executive director of the Chicago Council of Lawyers, a progressive bar association. Then she ran Congressman Sidney Yates's reelection campaign. Then her sister June introduced her to someone who got her the job with Mayor Washington. Then she had her flea-market period. Finally, she went to work for Mayor Daley as Chicago's Commissioner of Cultural Affairs.

If you go through that history and keep count, the number of worlds that Lois has belonged to comes to eight: the actors, the writers, the doctors, the lawyers, the park lovers, the politicians, the railroad buffs, and the flea-market aficionados. When I asked Lois to make her own list, she added musicians and the visual artists and architects and hospitality-industry people whom she works with in her current job. But if you looked harder at Lois's life you could probably subdivide her experiences into fifteen or twenty worlds. She has the same ability to move among different subcultures and niches that the busiest actors do. Lois is to Chicago what Burgess Meredith is to the movies.

Lois was, in fact, a friend of Burgess Meredith. I learned this by accident, which is the way I learned about most of the strange celebrity details of Lois's life, since she doesn't tend to drop names. It was when I was with her at her house one night, a big, rambling affair just off the lakeshore, with room after room filled with odds and ends

and old photographs and dusty furniture and weird bric-a-brac, such as a collection of four hundred antique egg cups. She was wearing bluejeans and a flowery-print top and she was smoking Carlton Menthol 100s and cooking pasta and holding forth to her son Joe on the subject of George Bernard Shaw, when she started talking about Burgess Meredith. “He was in Chicago in a play called ‘Teahouse of the August Moon,’ in 1956,” she said, “and he came to see my production of ‘Back to Methuselah,’ and after the play he came up to me and said he was teaching acting classes, and asked would I come and talk to his class about Shaw. Well, I couldn't say no.” Meredith liked Lois, and when she was running her alternative newspaper he would write letters and send in little doodles, and later she helped him raise money for a play he was doing called “Kicks and Company.” It starred a woman named Nichelle Nichols, who lived at Lois's house for a while. “Nichelle was a marvellous singer and dancer,” Lois said. “She was the lead. She was also the lady on the first...” Lois was doing so many things at once—chopping and stirring and smoking and eating and talking—that she couldn't remember the name of the show that made Nichols a star. “What's that space thing?” She looked toward Joe for help. He started laughing. “Star

THE LOOK

In nearly three decades in movies, Isabelle Huppert has worked with most of the great French film directors. She was sexy and ripe in Maurice Pialat's “Loulou” (1980), earthy in Bertrand Tavernier's “Coup de Torchon” (1981), and humorously déshabillée in Bertrand Blier's sex romp “My Best Friend's Girl” (1983). She has teamed up twice with Claude Chabrol: as the murderess in his dark, unnerving hit “La Cérémonie,” in 1996, and in the elegant grifter comedy “The Swindle,” which opened here in December. In February, with the release of Benoît Jacquot's twisted adaptation of Yukio Mishima's novel “The School of Flesh,” New Yorkers can see Huppert in one of her best roles—as a disaffected Parisian who has an affair with a sexually ambiguous younger man.

Photograph by Brigitte Lacombe



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something," she said. "Star . . . Star Trek! Nichelle was Lieutenant Uhura!"

ON a sunny morning not long ago, Lois went to a little café just off the Magnificent Mile, in downtown Chicago, to have breakfast with Mayor Daley. Lois drove there in a big black Mercury, a city car. Lois always drives big cars, and, because she is so short and the cars are so big, all that you can see when she drives by is the top of her frizzy blond head and the lighted ember of her cigarette. She was wearing a short skirt and a white vest and was carrying a white cloth shopping bag. Just what was in the bag was unclear, since Lois doesn't have a traditional relationship to the trappings of bureaucracy. Her office, for example, does not have a desk in it, only a sofa and chairs and a coffee table. At meetings, she sits at the head of a conference table in the adjoining room, and, as often as not, has nothing in front of her except a lighter, a pack of Carltons, a cup of coffee, and an octagonal orange ceramic ashtray, which she moves a few inches forward or a few inches back when she's making an important point, or moves a few inches to the side when she is laughing at something re-

ally funny and feels the need to put her head down on the table.

Breakfast was at one of the city's tourist centers. The Mayor was there in a blue suit, and he had two city officials by his side and a very serious and thoughtful expression on his face. Next to him was a Chicago developer named Al Friedman, a tall and slender and very handsome man who is the chairman of the Commission on Chicago Landmarks. Lois sat across from them, and they all drank coffee and ate muffins and batted ideas back and forth in the way that people do when they know each other very well. It was a "power breakfast," although if you went around the table you'd find that the word "power" meant something very different to everyone there. Al Friedman is a rich developer. The Mayor, of course, is the administrative leader of one of the largest cities in the country. When we talk about power, this is usually what we're talking about: money and authority. But there is a third kind of power as well—the kind Lois has—which is a little less straightforward. It's social power.

At the end of the nineteen-eighties, for example, the City of Chicago razed an entire block in the heart of down-

town and then sold it to a developer. But before he could build on it the real-estate market crashed. The lot was an eyesore. The Mayor asked for ideas about what to do with it. Lois suggested that they cover the block with tents. Then she heard that Keith Haring had come to Chicago in 1989 and worked with Chicago high-school students to create a giant five-hundred-foot-long mural. Lois loved the mural. She began to think. She'd long had a problem with the federal money that Chicago got every year to pay for summer jobs for disadvantaged kids. She didn't think it helped any kid to be put to work picking up garbage. So why not pay the kids to do arts projects like the Haring mural, and put the whole program in the tents? She called the program Gallery 37, after the number of the block. She enlisted the help of the Mayor's wife, Maggie Daley, whose energy and clout were essential in order to make the program a success. Lois hired artists to teach the kids. She realized, though, that the federal money was available only for poor kids, and, Lois says, "I don't believe poor kids can advance in any way by being lumped together with other poor kids." So Lois raised money privately to bring

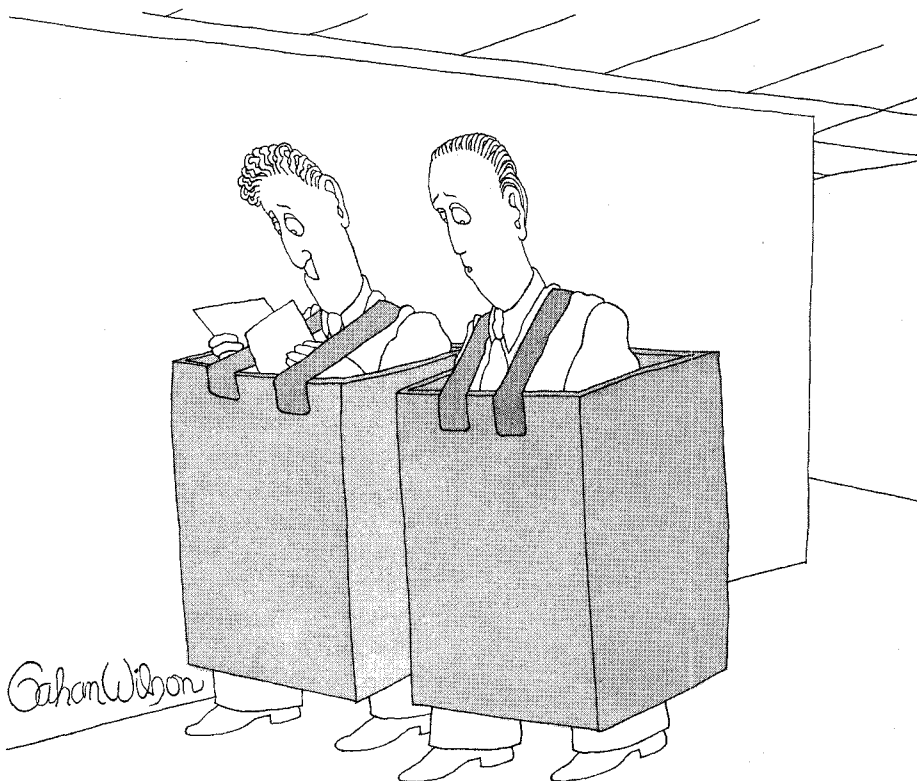
in middle-income kids, to mix with the poor kids and be put in the tents with the artists. She started small, with two hundred and sixty "apprentices" the first year, 1990. This year, there were more than three thousand. The kids study sculpture, painting, drawing, poetry, theatre, graphic design, dance, textile design, jewelry-making, and music. Lois opened a store downtown, where students' works of art are sold. She has since bought two buildings to house the project full time. She got the Parks Department to run Gallery 37 in neighborhoods around the city, and the Board of Education to let them run it as an after-school program in public high schools. It has been copied all around the world. Last year, it was given the Innovations in American Government Award by the Ford Foundation and the Harvard school of government.



Bernard Seltzer

"How much longer are you planning to play the sap?"

Gallery 37 is at once a jobs program, an arts program, a real-estate fix, a schools program, and a parks program. It involves federal money and city money and private money, stores and buildings and tents, Maggie Daley and Keith Haring, poor kids and middle-class kids. It is everything, all at once—a jumble of ideas and people and places which Lois somehow managed to make sense of. The ability to assemble all these disparate parts is, as should be obvious, a completely different kind of power from the sort held by the Mayor and Al Friedman. The Mayor has key allies on the city council or in the state-house. Al Friedman can do what he does because, no doubt, he has a banker who believes in him, or maybe a lawyer whom he trusts to negotiate the twists and turns of the zoning process. Their influence is based on close relationships. But when Lois calls someone to help her put together one of her projects, chances are she's not calling someone she knows particularly well. Her influence suggests something a little surprising—that there is also power in relationships that are not close at all.



"I remember when they used to give you stationary cubicles!"

THE sociologist Mark Granovetter examined this question in his classic 1974 book "Getting a Job." Granovetter interviewed several hundred professional and technical workers from the Boston suburb of Newton, asking them in detail about their employment history. He found that almost fifty-six per cent of those he talked to had found their jobs through a personal connection, about twenty per cent had used formal means (advertisements, head-hunters), and another twenty per cent had applied directly. This much is not surprising: the best way to get in the door is through a personal contact. But the majority of those personal connections, Granovetter found, did not involve close friends. They were what he called "weak ties." Of those who used a contact to find a job, for example, only 16.7 per cent saw that contact "often," as they would have if the contact had been a good friend; 55.6 per cent saw their contact only "occasionally"; and 27.8 per cent saw the contact "rarely." People were getting their jobs not through their friends but through acquaintances.

Granovetter argues that when it comes to finding out about new jobs—or, for that matter, gaining new information,

or looking for new ideas—weak ties tend to be more important than strong ties. Your friends, after all, occupy the same world that you do. They work with you, or live near you, and go to the same churches, schools, or parties. How much, then, do they know that you don't know? Mere acquaintances, on the other hand, are much more likely to know something that you don't. To capture this apparent paradox, Granovetter coined a marvellous phrase: "the strength of weak ties." The most important people in your life are, in certain critical realms, the people who aren't closest to you, and the more people you know who aren't close to you the stronger your position becomes.

Granovetter then looked at what he called "chain lengths"—that is, the number of people who had to pass along the news about your job before it got to you. A chain length of zero means that you learned about your job from the person offering it. A chain length of one means that you heard about the job from someone who had heard about the job from the employer. The people who got their jobs from a zero chain were the most satisfied, made the most money, and were unemployed for the

shortest amount of time between jobs. People with a chain of one stood second in the amount of money they made, in their satisfaction with their jobs, and in the speed with which they got their jobs. People with a chain of two stood third in all three categories, and so on. If you know someone who knows someone who knows someone who has lots of acquaintances, in other words, you have a leg up. If you know someone who knows someone who has lots of acquaintances, your chances are that much better. But if you know someone who has lots of acquaintances—if you know someone like Lois—you are still more fortunate, because suddenly you are just one step away from musicians and actors and doctors and lawyers and park lovers and politicians and railroad buffs and flea-market aficionados and all the other weak ties that make Lois so strong.

This sounds like a reformulation of the old saw that it's not what you know, it's who you know. It's much more radical than that, though. The old idea was that people got ahead by being friends with rich and powerful people—which is true, in a limited way, but as a practical lesson in how the world works is all

Casting Against the Part (I)



Victoria Roberts

but useless. You can expect that Bill Gates's godson is going to get into Harvard and have a fabulous job waiting for him when he gets out. And, of course, if you play poker with the Mayor and Al Friedman it is going to be a little easier to get ahead in Chicago. But how many godsons can Bill Gates have? And how many people can fit around a poker table? This is why affirmative action seems pointless to so many people: It appears to promise something—entry to the old-boy network—that it can't possibly deliver. The old-boy network is always going to be just for the old boys.

Granovetter, by contrast, argues that what matters in getting ahead is not the quality of your relationships but the quantity—not how close you are to those you know but, paradoxically, how many people you know whom you aren't particularly close to. What he's saying is that the key person at that breakfast in downtown Chicago is not the Mayor or Al Friedman but Lois Weisberg, because Lois is the kind of person who it really is possible for most of us to know. If you think about the world in this way, the whole project of affirmative action suddenly starts to make a lot more sense. Minority-admissions programs work not because they give black students access to the same superior educational resources as white students, or access to the same rich cultural environment as white students, or any other formal or grandiose vision of engineered equality. They work by giving black students access to the same white students as white students—by allowing them to make acquaintances outside their own social world and so shortening the chain lengths between them and the best jobs.

This idea should also change the way we think about helping the poor. When we're faced with an eighteen-year-old high-school dropout whose only career option is making five dollars and fifty cents an hour in front of the deep fryer at Burger King, we usually talk about the importance of rebuilding inner-city communities, attracting new jobs to depressed areas, and re-investing in neglected neighborhoods. We want to give that kid the option of another, better-paying job, right down the street. But does that really solve his problem? Surely what that eighteen-year-old really needs is not another marginal inducement to stay in his neigh-

borhood but a way to get out of his neighborhood altogether. He needs a school system that provides him with the skills to compete for jobs with middle-class kids. He needs a mass-transit system to take him to the suburbs, where the real employment opportunities are. And, most of all, he needs to know someone who knows someone who knows where all those good jobs are. If the world really is held together by people like Lois Weisberg, in other words, how poor you are can be defined quite simply as how far you have to go to get to someone like her. Wendy Willrich and Helen Doria and all the countless other people in Lois's circle needed to make only one phone call. They are well-off. The dropout wouldn't even know where to start. That's why he's poor. Poverty is not deprivation. It is isolation.

ONCE met a man named Roger Horchow. If you ever go to Dallas and ask around about who is the kind of person who might know everyone, chances are you will be given his name. Roger is slender and composed. He talks slowly, with a slight Texas drawl. He has a kind of wry, ironic charm that is utterly winning. If you sat next to him on a plane ride across the Atlantic, he would start talking as the plane taxied to the runway, you would be laughing by the time the seat-belt sign was turned off, and when you landed at the other end you'd wonder where the time had gone.

I met Roger through his daughter Sally, whose sister Lizzie went to high school in Dallas with my friend Sara M., whom I know because she used to work with Jacob Weisberg. (No Jacob, no Roger.) Roger spent at least part of his childhood in Ohio, which is where Lois's second husband, Bernie Weisberg, grew up, so I asked Roger if he knew Bernie. It would have been a little too apt if he did—that would have made it all something out of "The X-Files"—but instead of just answering, "Sorry, I don't," which is what most of us would have done, he paused for a long time, as if to flip through the "W"s in his head, and then said, "No, but I'm sure if I made two phone calls..."

Roger has a very good memory for names. One time, he says, someone was trying to talk him into investing his money in a business venture in Spain, and when he asked the names of the other investors he recognized one of

them as the same man with whom one of his ex-girlfriends had had a fling during her junior year abroad, fifty years before. Roger sends people cards on their birthdays: he has a computerized Rolodex with sixteen hundred names on it. When I met him, I became convinced that these techniques were central to the fact that he knew everyone—that knowing everyone was a kind of skill. Horchow is the founder of the Horchow Collection, the first high-end mail-order catalogue, and I kept asking him how all the connections in his life had helped him in the business world, because I thought that this particular skill had to have been cultivated for a reason. But the question seemed to puzzle him. He didn't think of his people collection as a business strategy, or even as something deliberate. He just thought of it as something he did—as who he was. One time, Horchow said, a close friend from childhood suddenly resurfaced. “He saw my catalogue and knew it had to be me, and when he was out here he showed up on my doorstep. I hadn't seen him since I was seven. We had zero in common. It was *wonderful*.” The juxtaposition of those last two sentences was not ironic; he meant it.

In the book “The Language Instinct,” the psychologist Steven Pinker argues against the idea that language is a cultural artifact—something that we learn “the way we learn to tell time.” Rather, he says, it is innate. Language develops “spontaneously,” he writes, “without conscious effort or formal instruction,” and “is deployed without awareness of its underlying logic. . . . People know how to talk in more or less the sense that spiders know how to spin webs.” The secret to Roger Horchow and Lois Weisberg is, I think, that they have a kind of social equivalent of that instinct—an innate and spontaneous and entirely involuntary affinity for people. They know everyone because—in some deep and less than conscious way—they can't help it.

ONCE, in the very early nineteen-sixties, after Lois had broken up with her first husband, she went to a party for Ralph Ellison, who was then teaching at the University of Chicago. There she spotted a young lawyer from the South Side named Bernie Weisberg. Lois liked him. He didn't notice

her, though, so she decided to write a profile of him for the Hyde Park *Herald*. It ran with a huge headline. Bernie still didn't call. “I had to figure out how I was going to get to meet him again, so I remembered that he was standing in line at the reception with Ralph Ellison,” Lois says. “So I called up Ralph Ellison”—whom she had never met—“and said, ‘It's so wonderful that you are in Chicago. You really should meet some people on the North Side. Would it be O.K. if I have a party for you?’” He said yes, and Lois sent out a hundred invitations, including one to Bernie. He came. He saw Dizzy Gillespie in the kitchen and Ralph Ellison in the living room. He was impressed. He asked Lois to go with him to see Lenny Bruce. Lois was mortified; she didn't want this nice Jewish lawyer from the South Side to know that she knew Lenny Bruce, who was, after all, a drug addict. “I couldn't get out of it,” she said. “They sat us down at a table right at the front, and Lenny keeps coming over to the edge of the stage and saying”—here Lois dropped her voice down very low—“‘Hello, Lois.’ I was sitting there like this.” Lois put her hands on either side of her face. “Finally I said to Bernie, ‘There are some things I should tell you about. Lenny Bruce is a friend of mine. He's staying at my house. The second thing is I'm defending a murderer.’” (But that's another story.) Lois and Bernie were married a year later.

The lesson of this story isn't obvious until you diagram it culturally: Lois got to Bernie through her connections with Ralph Ellison and Lenny Bruce, one of whom she didn't know (although later, naturally, they became great friends) and one of whom she was afraid to say that she knew, and neither of whom, it is safe to speculate, had ever really been connected with each other before. It seems like an absurdly roundabout way to meet someone. Here was a thirtyish liberal Jewish intellectual from the North Side of Chicago trying to meet a thirtyish liberal Jewish intellectual from the South Side of Chicago, and to get there she charted a cross-cultural social



course through a black literary lion and an avant-garde standup comic. Yet that's a roundabout journey only if you perceive the worlds of Lenny Bruce and Ralph Ellison and Bernie Weisberg to be impossibly isolated. If you don't—if, like Lois, you see them all as three points of an equilateral triangle—then it makes perfect sense. The social instinct makes everyone seem like part of a whole, and there is something very appealing about this, because it means that people like Lois aren't bound by the same categories and partitions that defeat the rest of us. This is what the power of the people who know everyone comes down to in the end. It is not—as much as we would like to believe otherwise—something rich and complex, some potent mixture of ambition and energy and smarts and vision and insecurity. It's much simpler than that. It's the same lesson they teach in Sunday school. Lois knows lots of people because she likes lots of people. And all those people Lois knows and likes invariably like her, too, because there is nothing more irresistible to a human being than to be unqualifiedly liked by another.

Not long ago, Lois took me to a reception at the Museum of Contemporary Art, in Chicago—a brand-new, Bauhaus-inspired building just north of the Loop. The gallery space was impossibly beautiful—cool, airy, high-ceilinged. The artist on display was Chuck Close. The crowd was sleek and well groomed. Black-clad young waiters carried pesto canapés and glasses of white wine. Lois seemed a bit lost. She can be a little shy sometimes, and at first she stayed on the fringes of the room, standing back, observing. Someone important came over to talk to her. She glanced up uncomfortably. I walked away for a moment to look at the show, and when I came back her little corner had become a crowd. There was her friend from the state legislature. A friend in the Chicago Park District. A friend from her neighborhood. A friend in the consulting business. A friend from Gallery 37. A friend from the local business-development group. And on and on. They were of all ages and all colors, talking and laughing, swirling and turning in a loose circle, and in the middle, nearly hidden by the commotion, was Lois, clutching her white bag, tiny and large-eyed, at that moment the happiest person in the room. ♦

LETTER FROM BUDAPEST

RESTAURANT AT THE ZOO

Why is George Lang so determined to revive the grandeur of Gundel?

BY ADAM GOPNIK

AROUND five o'clock one afternoon not long ago, in the vast kitchens of Gundel's restaurant, in Budapest, a young pastry chef was anxiously presenting a prototype of the world's first vertical strudel to her boss, the New York-based restaurant manager, entrepreneur, historian, and consultant George Lang. The chef had just come back from a stint in New York, where she had absorbed everything that New York cooks have been doing, and one of the things that impressed her was what they had been doing with high-rise desserts. Cakes and pies in New York no longer lie back demurely on the plate, as they have done for all of history. Now they stand bolt upright—architecturally, priapically, like stock prices—supported by a scaffolding of chocolate sticks or batons or fossilized orange peel. She had been inspired by her trip to modernize the Hungarian national dessert by turning it upright, too. Three strudel casings of slightly varying heights were stood on end, filled with a Tokay cream, and encircled by nubbly, broken praline. And yet the three cylinders, pressed together and surrounded by the jagged crumble, looked oddly dated, less of the nineties than of the seventies, like Peachtree Center, in Atlanta, or the Renaissance Center, in Detroit: a trio of rounded skyscrapers in the middle of a crumbling downtown.

A crowd of assistant chefs had gathered in a semicircle around the vertical strudel and waited nervously, hands on hips, as Lang prepared to taste the new dessert. There are two hundred and ten employees at Gundel, including forty-five cooks and pastry cooks. The men among them seem to have the same high-domed, worried Magyar face—shiny swept-back black hair, fronted by a cratered goose-fat-and-potato com-

plexion—and all of them seemed to have gathered in the pastry kitchen.

George Lang stood outside the circle and, stepping forward, could be seen deciding what he ought to do next: taste and enthuse, taste and consider, taste and blame? Lang is a small man with a gleaming, perfectly bald head and an appearance somewhere between Maurice Chevalier and Harpo Marx out of character. He is seventy-four, and was dressed that day, as he often is, in an impeccable navy-blue pin-striped suit, complete with pocket square, shined shoes, and cufflinks. His gaze is both watchful and quick to warm, and he seems made of an alloy of charm and iron. "In Budapest, before the war you never took off your hat to a lady," he had lectured a friend severely the day before, after the friend had done just that. "You removed your head." He demonstrated the difference. First, the wrong way—hat flipped casually sideways, like a lid on a pot tipped up for a tasting. Then the right way—hat quickly popped straight up over the head the moment the lady comes into view, head ducking quickly to the left in a movement of calculated deference, hat perched in hand, high above, hovering, vibrating in the near-miss of social embarrassment.

For this moment, though, he seemed to be in need of a new expression, appropriate to a vertical strudel produced according to a New York pattern. His normally clear and beaming face became clouded. *Am I for or against a vertical strudel?* He cleared his throat, set his expression, and for a moment his quixotic effort to remake the most famous Central European restaurant of 1910 into a restaurant fit for 2001 seemed to weigh on him. Then he stepped forward and accepted a fork



PHOTOGRAPH BY MAX VADUKUL

Lang at Gundel: His return trips to Hungary



fifty years after he fled to New York, are a kind of extended experiment in the reconstruction of civil society in Eastern Europe.

from an assistant who was wearing the standard Gundel whites, with two elephants delicately embroidered above the breast pocket.

Gundel occupies a mansion and garden just outside the Budapest city zoo. It was opened in 1894, and in the hundred and some years that people have been eating there they have often dined to the cries of elephants. For much of this century, Gundel was the best-known restaurant in Europe east of Vienna—the last great outpost of the high French manner before the steppes. No restaurant has been more important to a city, or even to a civilization, than Gundel was to the haut-bourgeois culture of Budapest, and the theatrical, cello-and-candlelight civilization of Central Europe, before that culture was extinguished by the Second World War.

Gundel has always been a “grand” restaurant. It has a two-tiered main dining room, a champagne-and-caviar bar, and seven upstairs private dining rooms.

In its century of existence, it has been presided over by Janos Gundel, his son Károly, the catering ministry of the Communist state of Hungary, and, for the past five years, Lang, who bought it in partnership with the New York tycoon Ronald Lauder. Lang, whose autobiography, “Nobody Knows the Truffles I’ve Seen,” was published last year, has often revived defunct restaurants; he is the man who remade the Café des Artistes in New York, which he still owns. He fled Hungary for New York in 1946 to become a concert violinist, and instead became the ringmaster of the postwar American revolution in the way people think about paying someone else to make dinner. Lang returns to Budapest about once every two months to bring nearly fifty accumulated years of know-how to a Hungarian staff whose previous culinary accomplishments were limited to getting all the food for the day cooked by ninety-three in the morning and making sure

not to poison any apparatchik. When Lang moved into the manager’s office, in an outbuilding near the restaurant, he found a small laboratory; it had been used by the previous supervisor, an employee of the catering ministry, to test the food before it was sent on to the bosses. Many people who ate the food in the Communist-era Gundel say that this consideration—food officially certified nontoxic—accurately describes its taste. Lang’s recent years in Hungary have been a kind of extended experiment in the reconstruction of civil society in Eastern Europe: an ongoing investment in the possibility of rebuilding the old Hungarian middle-class culture from the top down, with the roast duck coming first and the middle class calling itself into existence in order to eat it.

The vertical strudel had been rushed forward in part to meet a criticism of the kitchen which Lang had raised a few moments before, at one of the periodic staff meetings that he holds. The meeting took place in a large brick spotlighted wine cellar, with Lang at the head of a long table and the eleven senior members of the staff gathered gravely around it. For the purposes of his Budapest visit, Lang had decided to draw on a style of charm that might be called the Teasingly Avuncular, presenting himself as an uncle who has made good in America and has come back to a small town to test his nephews on their schoolwork before handing out silver dollars. There was a discussion of an ongoing audit of the taxes by one of the Hungarian unions. (“It’s fine if they find a small discrepancy here and there,” Lang reassured the worried restaurant treasurer. “If they find four hundred forints, let them. Let them win a little bit. Let them be heroes. They want to keep their jobs on the unions, so they don’t have to come and work for Chef Kalla.”) There was a proposal by some of the staff to work on contract rather than as union members. (“I’m a coward—I’m not even going to discuss it with them,” he said emphatically; he knows that even the normal Hungarian cuteness concerning the business organization of Gundel could be a public-relations disaster.)

Then somebody put on the table a frozen strudel dessert that the big German frozen-food concern Schöller is thinking of marketing under the Gun-



"How many times do I have to keep you?"

del name. Lang tasted it and immediately asked a stream of sharp questions. ("I taste rum. If there's rum in it, how can we market it to children as a family dessert? I understand it's a flavoring. It's still a problem.") One of the younger staff members announced proudly that he had arranged four special events for Gundel at culinary festivals around the world, including one in Japan. Excitedly, he began to enumerate them but mentioned only three. Lang interrupted him gently. "Is it three events or four events?" ("A Hungarian," he had commented dryly the day before, "is a person who can go into a revolving door behind you and come out ahead of you.") Though not a pettifogging man, he is fussy about small exactitudes with his staff: "The habit of deceiving the boss becomes the habit of deceiving yourself, which is no good." At last, Lang proceeded to the really serious business.

"Do you mind if I go back to the *parfait*?" he asked with dangerous politeness, pushing his chair back a cool distance from the table. "We just had dinner here last night, and I have a few observations, which I'll share with you individually. On the whole, the dinner was fine, excellent. What bothered me was the style, even the approach, of the desserts. They all had a similar, very pleasant taste. But where was the *tour de force*? Where was something that would make a guest exclaim? The desserts we had last night were nice." The room is silent, but he doesn't let up. "I'll say it again. The desserts were *nice*. And 'nice' is the deadliest word I know about desserts." A chill went around the table, the atmosphere now a little like that of a SPECTRE gathering just after Blofeld has flipped the switch on the backslider. The vertical strudel had been hurried forward half an hour later.

Afterward, in the back seat of his car, Lang said, a little wearily, "The strudel won't work. Upright or on its side or on its back. But it can be made to work. It was like the *parfait*. It was a professional job. The problem is that it was *too* professional. It lacked identity and character. A solid, professional, well-done job is the death of a restaurant. It's not enough to teach them how to run a grand restaurant in a grand style. You also have to teach them that a grand restaurant at the end of the twentieth century can't be too grand—it has

to have an atmosphere of impromptu pleasure." Lang grunted, and, for a moment, looked his age; for the most part, he seems eternally young, and is the father of two young children. (His six-year-old daughter, Gigi, was with him in Budapest, an eternal lap-sitter.) Later, sitting with Gigi at a circus inside the zoo, and watching a Hungarian clown juggle several dozen plates on four sticks, he commented, "I think I remember the name of this act. It's called 'A Life in the Restaurant Business.'"

ALTHOUGH the road from the Budapest airport to the city is lined with abandoned hard-goods factories, a Bauhaus desolation, Hungary is still usually seen as one of the successes of the post-Communist era in Eastern Europe, and a sign of this success has been the reconquest by Hungarians of their own food. Strangely, the pastry cooks were largely unaffected by fifty years of Communism, and the extraordinary pastry counters-cum-café that dot Budapest continued to turn out Rigó Jancsi slices (two pieces of dark-chocolate cake with a filet-mignon-size slice of chocolate mousse sandwiched in between) and amazing Dobos torta (a six-layer cake with chocolate and coffee buttercream and a hard caramel glaze). But though most of the other cafés and restaurants had kept their original décor—there wasn't enough money around to rip them apart—they were defunct, or had fallen under the dead hand of the catering ministry.

One by one, these places began to come back to life: Apostolok, a restaurant in downtown Pest which dates from 1910 and is done in a hallucinatory neo-Gothic décor, complete with pews and stained glass, and with a clock in the shape of a Star of David still in place over the bar (the original owner, despite his love for church décor, was, in a typical Budapest twist, Jewish); and the New York Café, which had been the leading literary café of Budapest before 1940, and seems as big as Grand Central. With the revival of haut-bourgeois Hungary have come, inevitably, American institutions. McDonald's has sixty-six locations, and faces the competition of Mr. Sandwich, a Hungarian firm. Dunkin'

Donuts had eight locations, but couldn't make them work; it was stopped cold by the *palacsinta*, a crêpe dessert. One of the great squares of Budapest is dominated today by a giant three-dimensional image of Wendy, with her two huge American pigtails.

Yet the old grandeur is still evident in the city: it can be felt in the ordinary-looking citizens in hats and overcoats posed heroically on the façade of the

Opera House, in the vast ceilings and deep plush chairs of the great cafés, in the theatrical eccentricity of even the smallest places that remain from the period. Budapest is a city used by history, but not yet used up by mass tourism: the guilt at wrist-level on one door in the Academy of Music has been worn away by

generations of indifferent, pushing, music-loving hands. Bourgeois pride is present in Budapest, and bourgeois nostalgia, too. Sadness projects itself in Budapest the way energy does in New York or insouciance in Paris. But a longing for a just-gone past has always been the national emotion. As the indispensable John Lukacs, the Hungarian-American historian, has written, this is not because Budapest was a sadder place than any other but because Hungarians recognize the precariousness of their grip on simple pleasures. "The tone is often melancholy," Lukacs writes of the Magyar temperament, "but the appetite for life—including the material pleasures of words, sounds, colors, tastes and touches—abounds."

Gundel sits at the end of the greatest avenue in Pest. (Budapest is, fairy-tale style, composed of two sister cities, old Buda and newer Pest, which sit on opposite sides of the Danube.) George Lang went to Gundel for the first time in 1936, when his father was alive. Budapest was still vibrant, and it was possible to imagine that the haut-bourgeois civilization Budapest had given to the world might go on forever. Restaurant-going in Budapest before the war was like theatregoing in New York. "My father was just a tailor," Lang recounts, "but for some reason, on a trip to Budapest to see how his music-crazy son was doing, he decided to treat me to the best restaurant in town." George was studying violin on a scholarship, and the family name was Deutsch, or "German." The Deutsches,





"'Vengeance is ours,' saith Courtland, Mumford & Blaine."

like most Hungarian Jews, were not just well assimilated but self-consciously Hungarian. "Judapest" was what the town was disdainfully called.

Gundel was an ecumenical restaurant. Janos Gundel, the patriarch of the family, had arrived as a boy from a small town in Bavaria, and eventually opened a restaurant. He did well enough to send his son, Károly, to study with César Ritz in Paris, and it was Károly who took over a family-style restaurant, called Wampetich, outside the zoo, changed the name to Gundel, raised the quality and ambition of the cooking, and made it famous throughout Europe. In a bittersweet profile of Gundel by Joseph Wechsberg, which was published in 1948 in this magazine, Károly reported that Ritz had told him, "Charles, be creative and inspired about new sauces and ragouts, but remain old-fashioned about your table arrangements." It was the "table arrangements"—the high manner of Paris—that Károly Gundel brought home. This faith was at its most fervent here in the provinces. "We must not be driven wild by the profusion of glasses in our sideboard," Károly Gundel once wrote to an assistant, "and must try to resist the urge of putting out more glasses than necessary; an unfilled glass at the end

of the meal is like a check without funds."

Although the cooking was firmly rooted in the grand manner of Escoffier, Károly Gundel's restaurant had a more pronounced local flavor than most of the other grand restaurants outside Paris. Escoffier himself had been interested in Hungarian produce and Hungarian spices, and this gave the locals the right to be local. Gundel served plenty of goose soufflé and stuffed dishes in béchamel sauce. But there was also paprika chicken and lamb with cabbage, and carp with *fogas* dumpling. (*Fogas* is the delicious freshwater fish of Lake Balaton.) Hungary was nearly the only country within the imperium of the old French cooking which produced a local cuisine that could stand up to Paris. Cities and countries that support wonderful restaurants and create new styles of cooking tend to be different from cities and countries that don't in two ways: they are almost always places where money-making people and art-making people share the same tables—where their tastes become emulsified, like ingredients blending in a mayonnaise—and they are almost always places with a lot of good local red wine. Red wine and hungry writers make good food. Budapest had the writers, and the

wine, too. Hungary is, with Spain and Italy, one of the three European countries that make red wine that can stand alongside the French. Their varietal names alone are improbable: Kékfrankos and Kadarka—wine from Mars.

The restaurant in the zoo was a big place, with room for almost a thousand diners when it was in full swing. In summer, the garden was hung with paper lanterns, and a Gypsy orchestra, with real Gypsies, played. Gundel was good through the thirties and even the forties, when darkness fell. Until 1944, the country was officially allied with Germany, but its tin-pot dictator, Admiral Horthy—Admiral, though Hungary has no seacoast—was an unrubid strongman, in the Franco mold, who conducted a timid war, and kept the vast Hungarian Jewish population persecuted but, mostly, protected. Then, in March of 1944, the Nazis took direct power. They deported Jews who lived in the villages to the death camps and allowed the Arrow Cross militia a free hand in the streets of Budapest.

The Arrow Cross is always described by Hungarians as "worse than the S.S."—a hard standard. It was a gang of feral youths, almost none out of their teens, who went on a six-month pogrom. The Arrow Cross gathered groups of Budapest Jews on the banks of the Danube, shot them, and tossed their bodies into the river. "The Blue Danube ran red in those days," George Lang recalls, "and that is not a figure of speech." Lang's parents were deported from their town, Székesfehérvár, and killed at Auschwitz. He was in Budapest at the time, and spent weeks dodging the Arrow Cross; in disguise, he actually joined its ranks for a brief time. On being discovered, he was taken to a torture chamber, on the first floor of a big bourgeois apartment building at 2 Szent István Boulevard, in the middle of downtown Pest, a couple of blocks from the Danube. He was badly beaten and then dragged down to a windowless coal cellar, where he waited for days, expecting to be shot. One prisoner after another was taken out of the darkness; none came back. Only the arrival of the Russian Army on the day he was scheduled for execution saved his life.

Gundel survived the war, in dimin-

ished form, under the control of Károly. "It's getting so I'm always amazed that anybody comes in at all," Károly Gundel told Wechsberg. "In time, I suppose, there won't be any guests, and that will be the end of it." In 1947, Károly was "permitted to emigrate," and Gundel was taken over by the national catering ministry. It became, for two generations of Hungarians and other Central European émigrés in America, a place not to visit but to remember.

AFTER escaping from the Arrow Cross, Lang, like many other Hungarians, was thrown back into prison by the Communists, who were suspicious of his story about joining the Arrow Cross and put him on trial; testimony by Jews he had helped and saved brought about his acquittal. He fled Hungary in 1946, glad to get away. He was no longer known as George Deutsch: he had taken his mother's maiden name, in rejection of Germany. Arriving in America, too old to become a concert violinist, as he had dreamed, he did pickup work in local orchestras, until, eventually, he found his improbable métier working in a cut-rate catering business on the Bowery, with the local winos serving as waiters. He earned a reputation for ingenuity, and ended up at the Waldorf-Astoria. "In those days," he says, "all the excitement in the food business was in hotels and particularly in hotel banquets. Philippe, the head of the Waldorf's banquet division, was my boss, and he was a legendary figure—he had an affair with Grace Kelly. The restaurant business in those days, on the other hand, was, apart from a few French colonizers, still essentially either a mom-and-pop business, with a chef hanging up his hat, or else a cut-rate chain." He soon left catering, though, to participate in the creation of restaurants, with Restaurant Associates, and then became, in his own words, the first international "restaurant consultant." Lang was the presiding genius of the Four Seasons, turning it from a Miesian white elephant

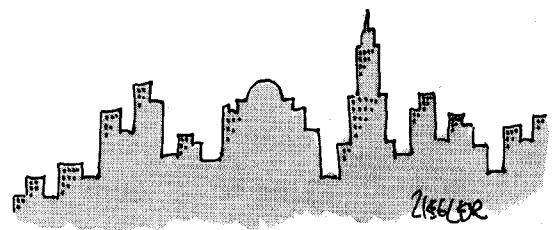
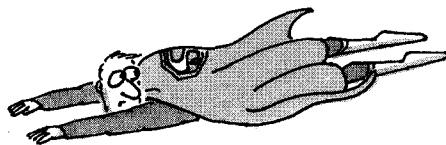
into a canteen for C.E.O.s, and then of restaurants as different as Hungaria, La Folie (a Studio 54-era caprice), and, longest of all, the revived Café des Artistes.

Perhaps it was his experience at the Indonesian Pavilion at the 1964 World's Fair, in Flushing, that most deeply affected his view of the business. For all its Robert Moses pomposity and U.S. Rubber silliness, the fair may have been a turning point in New York cooking, since the national pavilions helped show that "ethnic" food could be as good as the haute, "continental" kind that dominated the upper reaches of the trade. More important, Lang saw that the restaurant business in New York could become a perpetual World's Fair—that it might be, as it had been once in Budapest, a branch of show business for middle-class people. He realized that a great restaurant would now be remembered not for its services—banquets and weddings—but for its image. "I sensed that the whole world into which I had entered—that whole grand-hotel, Bemelmans world of banquets and honored guests—was all passing away," Lang says. "And something new was coming in its place."

Lang's name is most often associated with the idea of the theme restaurant, and, although he has "themed" restaurants running from Argentine steak-houses with real gaucho knives to a Hungarian restaurant where the diner could slice his own sausage from a "sausage tree," it is a term he cordially hates. Not a theme restaurant but a

"play" restaurant is his ideal, and he means "play" in both senses, "fun" and "theatre." "The play element is the most important in the game of dining" is his most emphatic statement on the subject. His career came to resemble a Broadway producer's—a series of hits and flops. He had smashes (the Four Seasons, Café des Artistes) and cult hits (La Folie, Hungaria), and even a few outright stinkers. He has a theatrical producer's combination of expansiveness and underlying watchful realism. "The only useful words in making restaurants are not 'great' and 'not great,'" he says. "Those are for amateurs. The only useful words are 'appropriate' and 'inappropriate.'"

IN 1990, the Hungarian "privatization authority" was selling off the remaining great places of the Budapest past, and Lang bid for what he accounted the greatest place of all. "War veterans and survivors of the privatization process have something in common," Lang says today. "Either they try to obliterate the memory or they obsess about it." The negotiations between Lang, Lauder, and the Hungarian authority took two years and became even more complicated when Károly Gundel's heirs—he had thirteen children—crowded in for their cut. "I brought his relatives to the restaurant, and we had a wonderful dinner," Lang recalls. "I told them that, sadly, we wouldn't really need their help in relaunching the restaurant, since I had noticed that when Károly took it over, in the first years, it was called, over the menu,



'Gundel, formerly Wampetich'—the original name of the restaurant in the zoo. "So I thought it would be appropriate to call the new restaurant 'Wampetich, formerly Gundel.'" An agreement was reached with the heirs the next morning to retain the Gundel name.

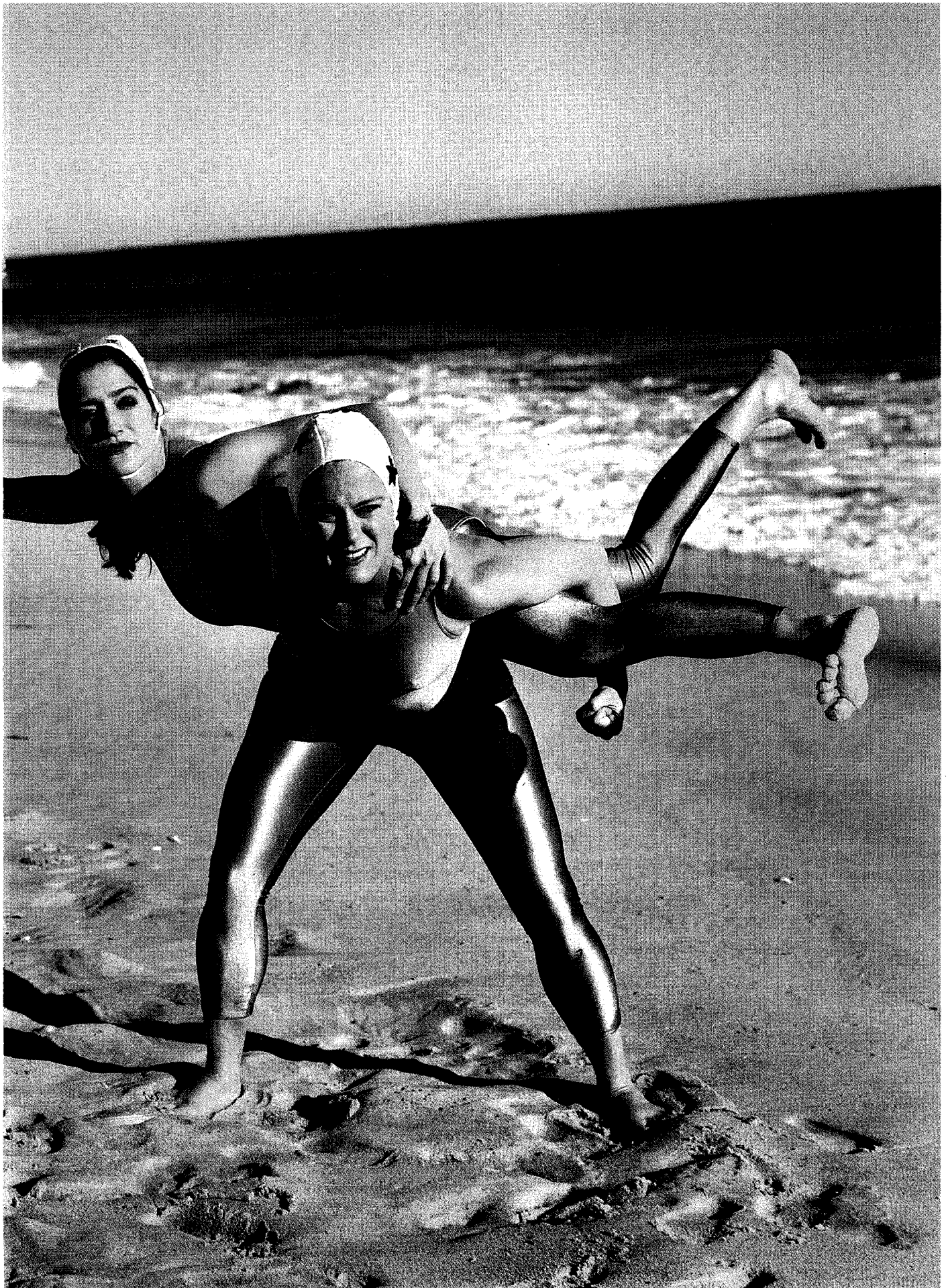
Lang began applying the techniques he had evolved for restaurant management in New York to the new Gundel. First, he did library research, and kitchen research. He prepared a cascade of memos on what could be done in the restaurant. Lang's memo on goose liver is typical: it runs to about two thousand words, and is a document of history, comparative religion, and creative speculation. Hungarian goose liver, or foie gras, has always been among the best in the world: it is a fact well known in Hungary, though obscure in France, that a lot of the goose foie gras sold in France comes from Hungarian farms. (The same is true of snails and frogs' legs.) Lang went to work, distinguishing between home-style salted goose liver, Jewish goose liver ("seethed," or poached, in water instead of in milk), and restaurant goose liver. He decided to revise the art of planking a whole goose liver—roasting it on a wooden

STUNT FLIERS

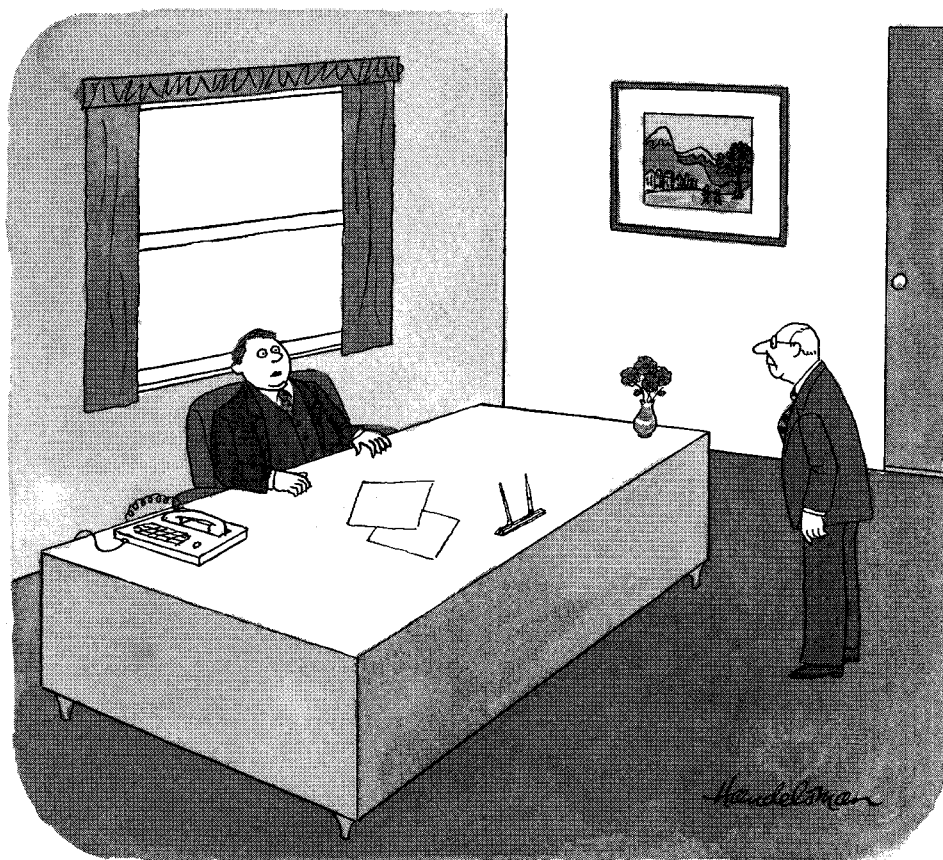
These swim-capped sea nymphs form the core of a seven-woman dance troupe whose deeds of derring-do—hoop diving, trapeze duets, a surprisingly natural combination of swing dance and wrestling take-downs—are described by the company's choreographer, Sarah East Johnson, as "Evel Knievel meets Esther Williams." To prepare for "Volcano Love" (at the Kitchen, from January 7th to January 14th), the quartet—Adrienne Truscott, the upside-down Natalie Agee, and Tanya Gagne, on the shoulders of Johnson—spent the summer at the country's only circus school, in San Francisco. But, despite the increasing complexity of their acrobatics, it's doubtful that the troupe will abandon its charming let's-put-on-a-show informality. "Our tricks got harder," Johnson says. "But I don't know if we'll mess up any less."

Photograph by Max Vadukul





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"We have no mandatory retirement age, Dave, but under certain conditions we tend to encourage people to die."

board—for three or four people, and thought it important to announce its origin. ("The goose liver today is from the little village of Fehérvárcsurgó," the hypothetical waiter would, in Lang's visionary scheme, announce to the imaginary patron.) He proposed variations on goose liver ("Let's try a goose-liver sandwich in which the top and the bottom of an apple is baked and the filling of the sandwich is goose liver") and a platter of three or four different kinds of goose liver ("It would be a concert bravura piece, like the famous salmon four ways at the Café des Artistes"). He thought of turn-of-the-century goose-liver dinners, and—this idea really worked, and was major—of smoking goose liver.

Gundel is a grand restaurant again. The main room has been re-created as a kind of Ernst Lubitsch fantasy of a turn-of-the-century Budapest that never quite existed, or not in this way. Small, shaded amber lamps, like those of a nineteen-fifties New York French restaurant, sit on the tables in the main dining room. There is a lot of dark, lacquered wood, pale-yellow linen, and a

wonderful, pseudo-Wiener Werkstätte carpet, with a stylized elephant motif, designed by Milton Glaser. Lang and Lauder have even assembled a first-class collection of Hungarian post-Impressionists. The food is terrific, local and homey and surprisingly light. The best things on the menu are often the simplest: the venison pörkölt, the roast duckling, and that smoked goose liver. "Most of the cooking is done now in the French restaurant style, *à la minute*, at the last second, rather than prepared in advance, as typically Hungarian ragouts usually are," Lang says. "This means that even dishes that are essentially stews are treated as sautés."

There is an underlying paradox in what Lang has had to do at Gundel. The theatrical style that he did so much to create in New York depends not on an illusion of endless luxury radiating from an international tradition, as it did at the old Gundel, but on an illusion of ethnic particularity rising from an authentic source—the illusion that produces Afghani restaurants and East Timor grills on Third Avenue (usually

managed, of course, by the same entrepreneurs from Syosset and Great Neck). "We have to use what we've learned in New York to make a convincing Hungarian restaurant in Budapest," he says.

ONCE the décor, the food, and the staff were in place, a harder problem was who was going to sit there, order food from the waiters, and eat it. The problem of re-creating a staff turned out to be easier than the problem of finding a decent audience. Gundel is an expensive place, of course. It always was. By New York or Parisian standards, it is not significantly dear: dinner for two usually comes to around a hundred dollars, but this is in a city where the average income is still at Communist-era levels. (A line cook at Gundel makes around five thousand dollars a year, and a line cook at Gundel is considered privileged.) This would not matter so much if the new Gundel were also perceived as an entirely indigenous place. Tour d'Argent and Le Grand Vefour and the three-star monuments of Paris are not places where the average Parisian goes more than once in a life-

time, but they sit on top of a pyramid that begins with the small bistros and cafés, works its way up toward the haut-bourgeois restaurant, and ends with the three-star palaces: even if you can't go there, you know that the places you do frequent are part of the architecture that keeps the top place up top. In Budapest, though, it sometimes can seem as if there were a dead-flat plain of American franchising, with a couple of great restaurants perched high in the air on a wavering, swaying pillar of American Express gold cards.

Lang feels this contradiction keenly. "I am a firm believer in élitism in the arts, but I hate élitism in pleasure," he says. He has created a second, satellite restaurant just outside Gundel, in one of the old restaurant's outbuildings, called the Owl's Castle. It is staffed, in and out of the kitchen, entirely by women, and serves simple Hungarian pörkölt, gulyás, and paprikas. (These are the three basic Hungarian paprika ragouts; "pörkölt" is what Americans call "goulash.") It also serves that smoked goose liver. The average check is about

twenty dollars for a couple, and it is packed. It is the favorite restaurant of the beloved Hungarian President-intellectual, Árpád Göncz. In some ways, Lang recognizes, it is closer to the spirit of Gundel's original restaurant than the new one is.

SOMETIMES Lang thinks that he is helping to rebuild a civil society that never quite existed in the first place. He has always been haunted, in the closed, opaque, inconsolable manner of European Jews who survived the period, by what happened to his parents and to him—haunted by how slippery and unreliable their Hungarian identity had turned out to be. The morning after the day that had seen the first flight of the vertical strudel, he took a deep breath, put on a blue suit and a silver tie, and decided to walk back to 2 Szent István Boulevard, where he was held captive and sentenced to death by the Arrow Cross. Although Szent István Boulevard is right in the center of Pest, the Third Avenue of the town, he had avoided it for more than half a century. "When I try to recall that time, what happened in 1944, I wonder how I managed at all. It was like entering a new atmosphere. Your skin cannot stand so much pressure per square inch—but what if someone raised it a bit, and then a bit more, and then a bit more? By the time it's at bursting point, you've almost become accustomed to it. It was like that for me: first a labor camp, and then escape, and then, Jesus Christ, joining the Arrow Cross.

"It was just an impulse, the one place where I might be able to be safe, and have the freedom to find my girlfriend," he explains. He and a friend claimed to be Seventh-Day Adventists, to explain their circumcision. ("I didn't know if Seventh-Day Adventists were circumcised, but I figured that the Arrow Cross hoods didn't know, either.") For several weeks, he brought hidden Jews medicine and food. But the Arrow Cross discovered the real identities of Lang and his friend when they were insufficiently brutal in a Jewish roundup, and they ended up at 2 Szent István Boulevard.

"I don't know how I had the presence of mind to survive," he said as he walked down the boulevard, nervously watching the numbers decrease. "So this is twelve, ten. . . . You know, they rounded us up, they were going to take us to another Arrow Cross headquar-

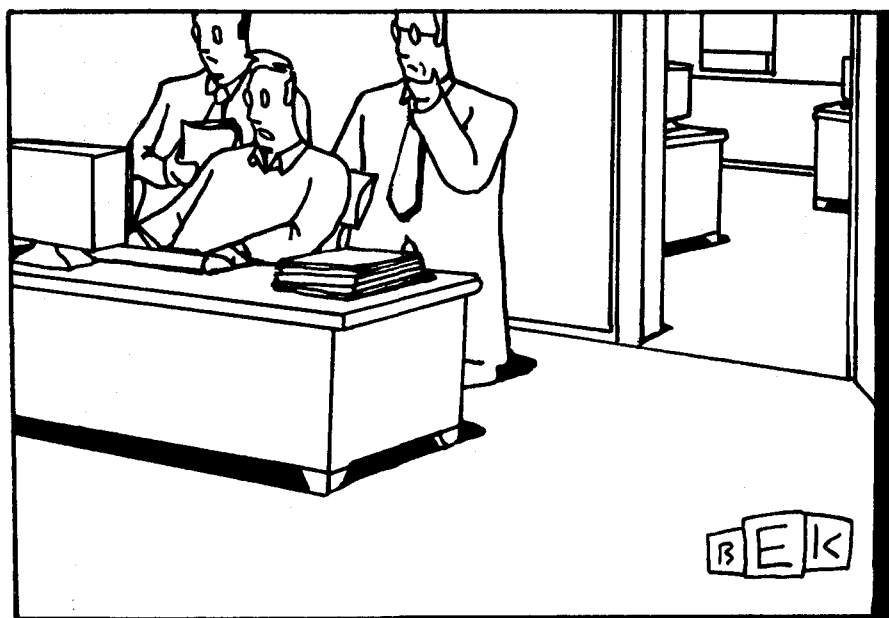
ters and torture chamber that was on another street. But it was full! No room at the inn, so they sent us on to their branch torture chamber. How did I manage the pressure? How did I survive in the Arrow Cross? Eight. Six. . . . We must be approaching it."

Suddenly, a disconcertingly familiar smell rose from the street, a Garden State Parkway smell, fat and sweet and American. "Two. This must be two," Lang muttered to himself. He looked up. The old building had been painted bright yellow and red. Then he looked at the sign in front, and it all—the smell, the color—made sense. At the end of the twentieth century, 2 Szent István Boulevard, the headquarters and torture chamber of the Arrow Cross, had become a McDonald's.

For a moment, George Lang stopped, his body stiffened in surprise and disbelief. Then he turned and began to laugh. "This—this is the one thing I do not think I could have imagined," he said, and he watched as a steady stream of Hungarians emerged, claspings the familiar paper bags with the rim of inter-linked arches, and chewing on fries. He walked into the courtyard, and, after some ringing, found the daughter of the concierge, who stared at him with a blank, impassive face for five minutes as he spoke. Finally, she shrugged, and then, a bare fraction warmer, opened the stairs leading down to the coal cellar. "This I remember," he said softly as

he descended the stairs, touching the damp-stained stone walls. "I remember this." He stopped at the bottom of the stairs. There was a small bin, a locker, with a link-fence front. Inside were a few piled-up boxes. "This is the coal cellar. Here was coal," he said. "Here was coal." He stopped. His heart seemed to be visibly beating. "They kept us here, and then they took us one by one. They would hang us from a lamppost in front of the Vígsház, a theatre. There was one man here, he told me his name, Ernő Steiner. Then they dragged him out and hanged him an hour later. They were unbelievable. A friend urinated in the back of the cellar, and they beat him with a rifle butt. 'How dare you do that in front of women?' the Arrow Cross kid cried. There was a girl there. The next day, he killed her." Lang stood in silence for a minute, and then shook his head and went back up the stairs.

He walked into the street. "I ran across the street," he recalled, stonily, "and they pushed us out, to where the Russians were coming, hoping that the Russians would shoot us, kill us. My friend ran there, and the Russians didn't shoot. So they shot him in the back, and then they ran. And I ran across the street, and I saw an open door, and I dived inside." The reassuring, late-century American smell of the McDonald's on the first floor of the old Arrow Cross headquarters filled the sidewalk, and the traffic went by on Szent István Boulevard. ♦



"I'd like to believe we're redefining the way future generations will waste their time."

FICTION

NEW YORK MINING DISASTER

Tokyo with attitude.

BY HARUKI MURAKAMI

THEY blew out their lamps to save on air, and darkness surrounded them. No one spoke. All they could hear in the dark was the sound of water dripping from the ceiling every five seconds.

"O.K., everybody, try not to breathe so much. We don't have enough air left," an old miner said. He held his voice to a whisper, but even so the wooden beams on the ceiling of the tunnel creaked faintly. In the dark, the miners huddled together, straining to hear one sound. The sound of pickaxes. The sound of life.

They waited for hours. Reality began to melt away in the darkness. Everything began to feel as if it were happening a long time ago, in a world far away. Or was it happening in the future, in a different far-off world?

Outside, people were digging a hole, trying to reach them. It was like a scene from a movie.

A FRIEND of mine has a habit of going to the zoo whenever there's a typhoon. He's been doing this for ten years. At a time when most people are closing their storm shutters or running out to stock up on mineral water or checking to see if their radios and flashlights are working, my friend wraps himself in an army-surplus poncho from the Vietnam War, stuffs a couple of cans of beer into his pockets, and sets off. He lives about a fifteen-minute walk away.

If he's unlucky, the zoo is closed, "owing to inclement weather," and its gates are locked. When this happens, my friend sits down on the stone statue of a squirrel next to the entrance, drinks his lukewarm beer, and then heads back home.

But when he makes it there in time he pays the entrance fee, lights a soggy cigarette, and surveys the animals, one by one. Most of them have retreated to

their shelters. Some stare blankly at the rain. Others are more animated, jumping around in the gale-force winds. Some are frightened by the sudden drop in barometric pressure; others turn vicious.

My friend makes a point of drinking his first beer in front of the Bengal tiger cage. (Bengal tigers always react the most violently to storms.) He drinks his second one outside the gorilla cage. Most of the time the gorillas aren't the least bit disturbed by the typhoon. They stare at him calmly as he sits like a mermaid on the concrete floor sipping his beer, and you'd swear they actually felt sorry for him.

"It's like being in an elevator when it breaks down and you're trapped inside with strangers," my friend tells me.

TYPHOONS aside, my friend's no different from anyone else. He works for an export company, managing foreign investments. It's not one of the better firms, but it does well enough. He lives alone in a neat little apartment and gets a new girlfriend every six months. Why he insists on having a new one every six months (and it's always exactly six months) I'll never understand. The girls all look the same, as if they were perfect clones of one another. I can't tell them apart.

My friend owns a nice used car, the collected works of Balzac, and a black suit, a black tie, and black shoes that are perfect for attending funerals. Every time someone dies, I call him and ask if I can borrow them, even though the suit and the shoes are one size too big for me.

"Sorry to bother you again," I said the last time I called. "Another funeral's come up."

"Help yourself. You must be in a hurry," he answered. "Why don't you come over right away?"

When I arrived, the suit and tie were laid out on the table, neatly pressed, the shoes were polished, and the fridge was full of cold imported beer. That's the kind of guy he is.

"The other day I saw a cat at the zoo," he said, opening a beer.

"A cat?"

"Yeah, two weeks ago. I was in Hokkaido on business and dropped by a zoo near my hotel. There was a cat asleep in a cage with a sign that said 'Cat.'"

"What kind of cat?"

"Just an ordinary one. Brown stripes, short tail. And unbelievably fat. It just plopped down on its side and lay there."

"Maybe cats aren't so common in Hokkaido."

"You're kidding, right?" he asked, astonished. "There must be cats in Hokkaido. They can't be that unusual."

"Well, look at it another way: why shouldn't there be cats in a zoo?" I said. "They're animals, too, right?"

"Cats and dogs are your run-of-the-mill-type animals. Nobody's going to pay money to see them," he said. "Just look around you—they're everywhere. Same thing with people."

When we'd finished off a six-pack, I put the suit and tie and shoebox into a large paper bag.

"Sorry to keep doing this to you," I said. "I know I should buy my own suit, but somehow I never get around to it. I feel like if I buy funeral clothes I'm saying it's O.K. if somebody dies."

"It's no problem," he said. "I'm not using them anyway. It's better to have someone use them than to have them hanging in the closet, right?"

It was true that in the three years since he'd had the suit made he'd hardly worn it.

"It's weird, but since I got the suit not a single person I know has died," he explained.



It was like a surprise attack on a lazy spring day—as if someone, on top of a metaphysical hill, had sprayed us with bullets.

"That's the way it goes."

"Yes, that's the way it goes," he said.

FOR me, on the other hand, it was the Year of Funerals. Friends and former friends died one after another, like ears of corn withering in a drought. I was twenty-eight. My friends were all about the same age—twenty-seven, twenty-eight, twenty-nine. Not the right age to die.

A poet dies at twenty-one, a revolutionary or a rock star at twenty-four. But after that you assume that everything is going to be all right. You've made it past Dead Man's Curve and you're out of the tunnel, cruising straight for your destination down a six-lane highway—whether you want to be or not. You get your hair cut; you shave every morning. You aren't a poet anymore, or a revolutionary or a rock star.

You don't pass out drunk in phone booths or blast the Doors at four in the morning. Instead, you buy life insurance from your friend's company, drink in hotel bars, and keep your dental bills for medical deductions. That's normal at twenty-eight.

But that was exactly when the unexpected massacre started in our lives. It was like a surprise attack on a lazy spring day—as if someone, on top of a metaphysical hill, holding a metaphysical machine gun, had sprayed us with bullets. One minute we were changing our clothes, and the next minute they didn't fit anymore: the sleeves were inside out, and we had one leg in one pair of pants and the other in a different pair. It was a mess.

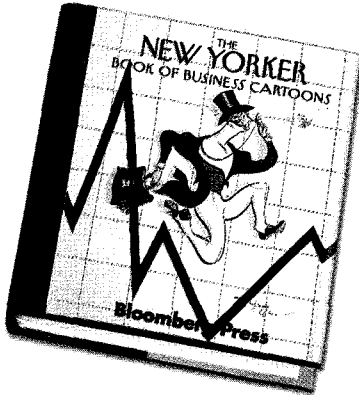
But death is just that. A rabbit is a rabbit whether it springs out of a hat or a wheat field. A hot oven is a hot oven,

and the black smoke rising from a chimney is what it is—black smoke rising from a chimney.

The first person to straddle the divide between reality and unreality (or unreality and reality) was a friend from college who taught English at a junior-high school. He'd been married for three years, and his wife had gone back to her parents' house in Shikoku to have their baby.

One unusually warm Sunday afternoon in January, he went to a department store and bought two cans of shaving cream and a German-made knife that was big enough to lop off an elephant's ear. He went home and ran a bath. He got some ice from the refrigerator, downed a bottle of Scotch, climbed into the tub, and slit his wrists. His mother found his body two days later. The police came and took a lot of

Very funny business, indeed!



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B L O O M B E R G P R E S S

photographs. Blood had dyed the bath the color of tomato juice. The police ruled it a suicide. After all, the doors had been locked, and, of course, the deceased had bought the knife himself. But why did he buy two cans of shaving cream that he didn't plan to use? No one knew.

Maybe it hadn't hit him when he was at the department store that in a couple of hours he'd be dead. Or maybe he was afraid that the cashier would guess that he was going to kill himself.

He didn't leave a will or a note. On the kitchen table there was only a glass, the empty whiskey bottle and ice bowl, and the two cans of shaving cream. While he was waiting for the bath to fill, knocking back glass after glass of Haig-on-the-rocks, he must have stared at those cans and thought something along the lines of *I'll never have to shave again*.

A man's death at twenty-eight is as sad as the winter rain.

DURING the next twelve months, four more people died.

One died in March in an incident at an oil field in Saudi Arabia or Kuwait, and two died in June—a heart attack and a traffic accident. From July to November there was peace, but then in December another friend died, also in a car crash.

Unlike my first friend, who'd killed himself, these friends never had time to realize that they were dying. For them it was like climbing up a staircase they'd climbed a million times before and suddenly finding a step missing.

"Would you make up the bed for me?" the friend who died of a heart attack had asked his wife. He was a furniture designer. It was eleven o'clock in the morning. He'd woken up at nine, worked for a while in his room, and then said he felt sleepy. He went to the kitchen, made some coffee, and drank it. But the coffee didn't help. "I think I'll take a nap," he said. "I hear a buzzing sound in the back of my head." Those were his last words. He curled up in bed, went to sleep, and never woke up again.

The friend who died in December was the youngest, and the only woman. She was twenty-four, like a revolutionary or a rock star. One cold rainy

evening just before Christmas, she was flattened in the tragic yet quite ordinary space between a beer-delivery truck and a concrete telephone pole.

A FEW days after the last funeral, I went to my friend's apartment to return the suit, which I'd picked up from the dry cleaner's, and to give him a bottle of whiskey to thank him.

"Much obliged. You've helped me out once again," I said.

As usual, his fridge was full of cold beer, and his comfortable sofa reflected a faint ray of sunlight. On the coffee table there was a clean ashtray and a pot of Christmas poinsettias.

He accepted the suit, in its plastic covering, his movements leisurely—like those of a bear just coming out of hibernation—and quietly put it away.

"I hope the suit doesn't smell like a funeral," I said.

"Clothes aren't important. The real problem is what's *inside* them."

"Um," I said.

"One funeral after another for you this year," he said, stretching out on the sofa and pouring beer into a glass. "How many all together?"

"Five," I said, spreading out the fingers of my left hand. "But I think that's got to be it."

"Are you sure?"

"Enough people have died."

"It's like the curse of the Pyramids or something," he said. "I remember reading that somewhere. The curse continues until enough people have died. Or else a red star appears in the sky and the moon's shadow covers the sun."

After we finished a six-pack, we started on the whiskey. The winter sunlight sloped gently into the room.

"You look a little glum these days," he said.

"Really?" I said.

"You must be thinking about things too much in the middle of the night," he said. "I've stopped thinking about things at night."

"How'd you manage that?"

"When I get depressed, I start to clean. Even if it's two or three in the morning. I wash the dishes, wipe off the stove, mop the floor, bleach the dish towels, organize my desk drawers, iron every shirt in sight," he said, stirring his drink with his finger. "I do that till I'm

exhausted, then I have a drink and go to sleep. In the morning I get up and by the time I'm putting on my socks I can't even remember what it was I was thinking about."

I looked around again. As always, the room was clean and orderly.

"People think of all kinds of things at three in the morning. We all do. That's why we each have to figure out our own way of fighting it off."

"You're probably right," I said.

"Even animals think things over at 3 A.M.," he said, as if he were remembering something. "Have you ever gone to a zoo at 3 A.M.?"

"No," I answered vaguely. "No, of course not."

"I've only done it once. A friend of mine works at a zoo, and I asked him to let me in when he had the night shift. You're not supposed to, really." He shook his glass. "It was a strange experience. I can't explain it, but I felt as if the ground had silently split open and something was crawling up out of it. And then there was this invisible thing on a rampage in the dark. It was as if the cold night air had coagulated. I couldn't see it, but I felt it, and the animals felt it, too. It made me think about the fact that the ground we walk on goes all the way to the earth's core, and I suddenly realized that the core has sucked up an incredible amount of time."

I didn't say anything.

"Anyway, I never want to go again—to the zoo in the middle of the night, I mean."

"You prefer a typhoon?"

"Yeah," he said. "I'll take a typhoon any day."

THE phone rang and he went to his bedroom to take the call. It was his girlfriend clone, with an endless clone phone call. I wanted to tell him I was going to call it a day, but he was on the phone forever. I gave up waiting and switched on the TV. It was a twenty-seven-inch color set with a remote control, the kind you barely have to touch to change the channel. The TV had six speakers and great sound. I'd never seen such a wonderful TV.

I made two complete rounds of the channels before settling on a news program. A border clash, a fire, exchange

rates going up and down, a new limit on car imports, an outdoor winter swim meet, a family suicide. All these bits of news seemed somehow connected, like people in a high-school-graduation photo.

"Any interesting news?" my friend asked as he came back into the room.

"Not really," I said.

"Do you watch a lot of TV?"

I shook my head. "I don't have a TV."

"There's at least one good thing about TV," he said after a while. "You can shut it off whenever you like. And nobody complains."

He pushed the "Off" button on the remote control. Immediately, the screen went blank. The room was still. Outside the window, lights in other buildings were starting to come on.

We sat there for five minutes, drinking whiskey, with nothing to talk about. The telephone rang again, but he pretended not to hear it. Just as the phone stopped ringing, he hit the "On" button, as if he'd suddenly remembered something. The picture returned instantly, and a commentator standing in front of a graph gestured with a pointer as he explained changes in the price of oil.

"See? He didn't even notice that we'd switched him off for five minutes."

"True enough," I said.

"Why is that?"

It was too much trouble to think it through, so I shook my head.

"When you switch it off, one side ceases to exist. It's us or him. You just hit the switch and there's a communications blackout. It's easy."

"That's one way of thinking of it," I said.

"There are millions of ways of thinking. In India they grow coconut trees. In Argentina it rains political prisoners from helicopters." He switched the TV off again. "I don't want to say anything about other people," he said, "but consider the fact that there are ways of dying that don't end in funerals. Types of death you can't smell."

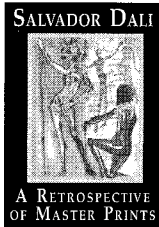
I nodded silently. I felt that I knew what he was getting at. At the same time, I felt that I had no idea what he meant. I was tired and a bit confused. I sat there, fingering one of the poinsettia's green leaves.

"I've got some champagne," he said

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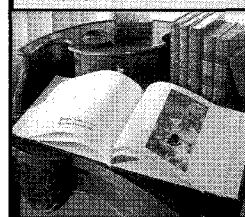
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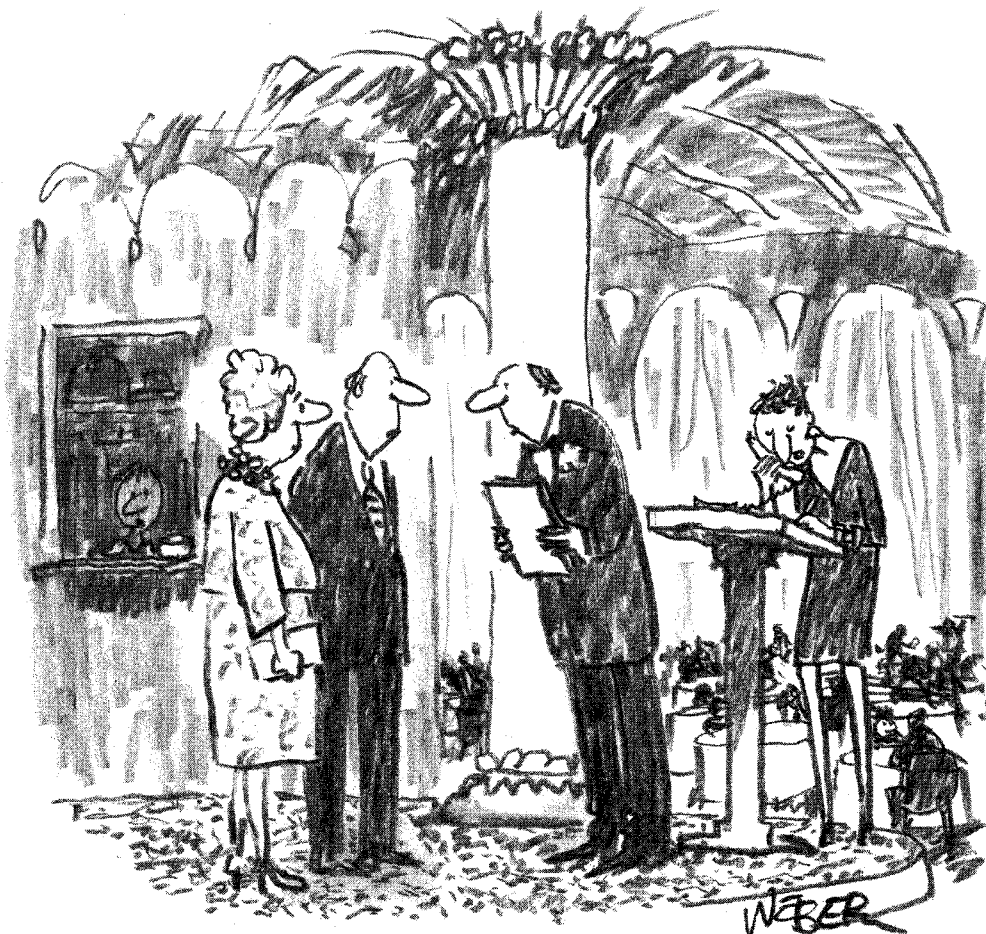


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"I'm afraid the celebrities we have tonight are all from the aluminum industry."

earnestly. "I brought it back from a business trip to France a while ago. I don't know much about champagne, but this is supposed to be great. Would you like some? Champagne might be just the thing after a string of funerals."

He brought out the chilled champagne bottle and two clean glasses and set them quietly on the table, then smiled slyly. "Champagne's completely useless, you know," he said. "The only good part is the moment you pop the cork."

"I can't argue with you there," I said.

We popped the cork, and talked for a while about the zoo in Paris and the animals that live there. The champagne was excellent.

THERE was a party at the end of the year, an annual New Year's Eve party at a bar in Roppongi, which had been rented for the occasion. A piano trio played, and there was a lot of good food and drink. When I ran

across someone I knew, I'd chat for a while. My job required that I put in an appearance every year. Parties aren't my thing, but this one was easy to take. I had nothing else to do on New Year's Eve and could just stand by myself in a corner, relax, have a drink, and enjoy the music. No obnoxious people, no need to be introduced to strangers and listen to them rant for half an hour about how a vegetarian diet cures cancer.

But that evening someone introduced me to a woman. After the usual small talk, I tried to retreat to my corner again. But the woman followed me back to my seat, whiskey glass in hand.

"I asked to be introduced to you," she said amiably.

She wasn't the type to turn heads, though she was certainly attractive. She was wearing an expensive green silk dress. I guessed that she was about thirty-two. She could easily have made herself look younger, but she

didn't seem to think it was worth the trouble. Three rings graced her fingers, and a faint smile played on her lips.

"You look exactly like someone I know," she said. "Your facial features, your back, the way you talk, the over-all mood—it's an amazing likeness. I've been watching you ever since you came in."

"If he's that much like me, I'd like to meet the guy," I said. I had no idea what else to say.

"You would?"

"I'd want to see what it feels like to meet someone who's exactly like me."

Her smile deepened for an instant, then softened. "But it's impossible," she said. "He died five years ago. When he was about the same age you are now."

"Is that right?" I said.

"I killed him."

The trio was just finishing its second set, and there was a smattering of halfhearted applause.

"Do you like music?" she asked me.

"I do if it's nice music in a nice world," I said.

"In a nice world there is no nice music," she said, as if she were telling some vital secret. "In a nice world the air doesn't vibrate."

"I see," I said, not knowing how to respond.

"Have you seen the movie where Warren Beatty plays the piano in a night club?"

"No, I haven't."

"Elizabeth Taylor is one of the customers at the club, and she's really poor and miserable."

"Hmm."

"So Warren Beatty asks Elizabeth Taylor if she has any requests."

"And does she?"

"I forget. It's a really old movie." Her rings sparkled as she drank her whiskey. "I hate requests. They make me feel unhappy. It's like when I take a book out of the library. As soon as I start to read it, all I can think about is when I'll finish it."

She put a cigarette between her lips. I struck a match and lit it for her.

"Let's see," she said. "We were talking about the person who looked like you."

"How did you kill him?"

"I threw him into a beehive."

"You're kidding, right?"

"Yes," she said.

Instead of sighing, I took a sip of whiskey. The ice had melted and it barely tasted like whiskey anymore.

"Of course, legally I'm not a murderer," she said. "Or morally, either."

"Neither legally nor morally a murderer." I didn't want to, but I reviewed the points she'd made. "But you did kill someone?"

"Right." She nodded happily. "Someone who looked just like you."

Across the room a man let out a loud laugh. And the people around him laughed, too. Glasses clinked. It sounded very far away but extremely clear. I don't know why, but my heart was pounding, as if it were expanding or moving up and down. I felt as if I were walking on earth that was floating on water.

"It took less than five seconds," she said. "To kill him."

We were silent for a while. She was taking her time, savoring the silence.

"Do you ever think about freedom?" she asked.

"Sometimes," I said. "Why do you ask?"

"Can you draw a daisy?"

"I think so. Is this a personality test?"

"Almost." She laughed.

"Well, did I pass?"

"Yes," she answered. "You'll be fine. Nothing to worry about. Intuition tells me you'll live a good long life."

"Thank you," I said.

The band began playing "Auld Lang Syne."

"Eleven-fifty-five," she said, glancing at the gold watch on her pendant. "I really like 'Auld Lang Syne.' How about you?"

"I prefer 'Home on the Range.' All those deer and antelope."

She smiled again. "You must like animals."

"I do," I said. And I thought of my friend who likes zoos and of his funeral suit.

"I enjoyed talking to you. Goodbye."

"Goodbye," I said. ♦

(Translated from the Japanese,
by Philip Gabriel.)



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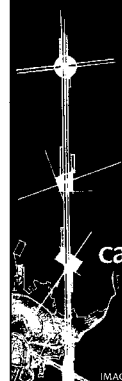


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How do you translate a writer who felt alienated from his own words?

BY CYNTHIA OZICK

FRANZ KAFKA is the twentieth century's valedictory ghost. In two incomplete yet incommensurable novels, "The Trial" and "The Castle," he submits, as lingering spirits will, a ghastly accounting—the sum total of modern totalitarianism. His imaginings outstrip history and memoir, incident and record, film and reportage. He is on the side of realism—the poisoned realism of metaphor. Cumulatively, Kafka's work is an archive of our era: its anomie, depersonalization, afflicted innocence, innovative cruelty, authoritarian demagoguery, technologically adept killing. But none of this is served raw. Kafka has no politics; he is not a political novelist in the way of Orwell or Dickens. He writes from insight, not, as people like to say, from premonition. He is often taken for a metaphysical, or even a religious, writer, but the supernatural elements in his fables are too entangled in concrete everydayness, and in caricature, to allow for any incandescent certainties. The typical Kafka figure has the cognitive force of a chess master—which is why the term "Kafkaesque," a synonym for the uncanny, misrepresents at the root. The Kafka mind rests not on unintelligibility or the surreal but on adamant logic—on the sane expectation of rationality. A singing mouse, an enigmatic ape, an impenetrable castle, a deadly contraption, the Great Wall of China, a creature in a burrow, fasting as an art form, and, most famously, a man metamorphosed into a bug: all these are steeped in reason; and also in reasoning. "Fairy tales for dialecticians," the critic Walter Benjamin remarked. In the two great zones of literary susceptibility—the lyrical and the logical—the Kafka "K" attaches not to Keats but to Kant.

The prose that utters these dire ana-

lytic fictions has, with time, undergone its own metamorphosis, and only partly through repeated translations into other languages. Something—fame—has intervened to separate Kafka's stories from our latter-day reading of them, two or three generations on. The words are unchanged; yet those same passages Kafka once read aloud, laughing at their fearful comedy, to a small circle of friends are now markedly altered under our eyes—enamelled by that labyrinthine process through which a literary work awakens to discover that it has been transformed into a classic. Kafka has taught us how to read the world differently: as a kind of decree. And because we have read Kafka we know more than we knew before we read him, and are now better equipped to read him acutely. This may be why his graven sentences begin to approach the scriptural; they become as fixed in our heads as any hymn; they seem ordained, fated. They carry the high melancholy tone of resignation unabraded by cynicism. They are stately and plain and full of dread.

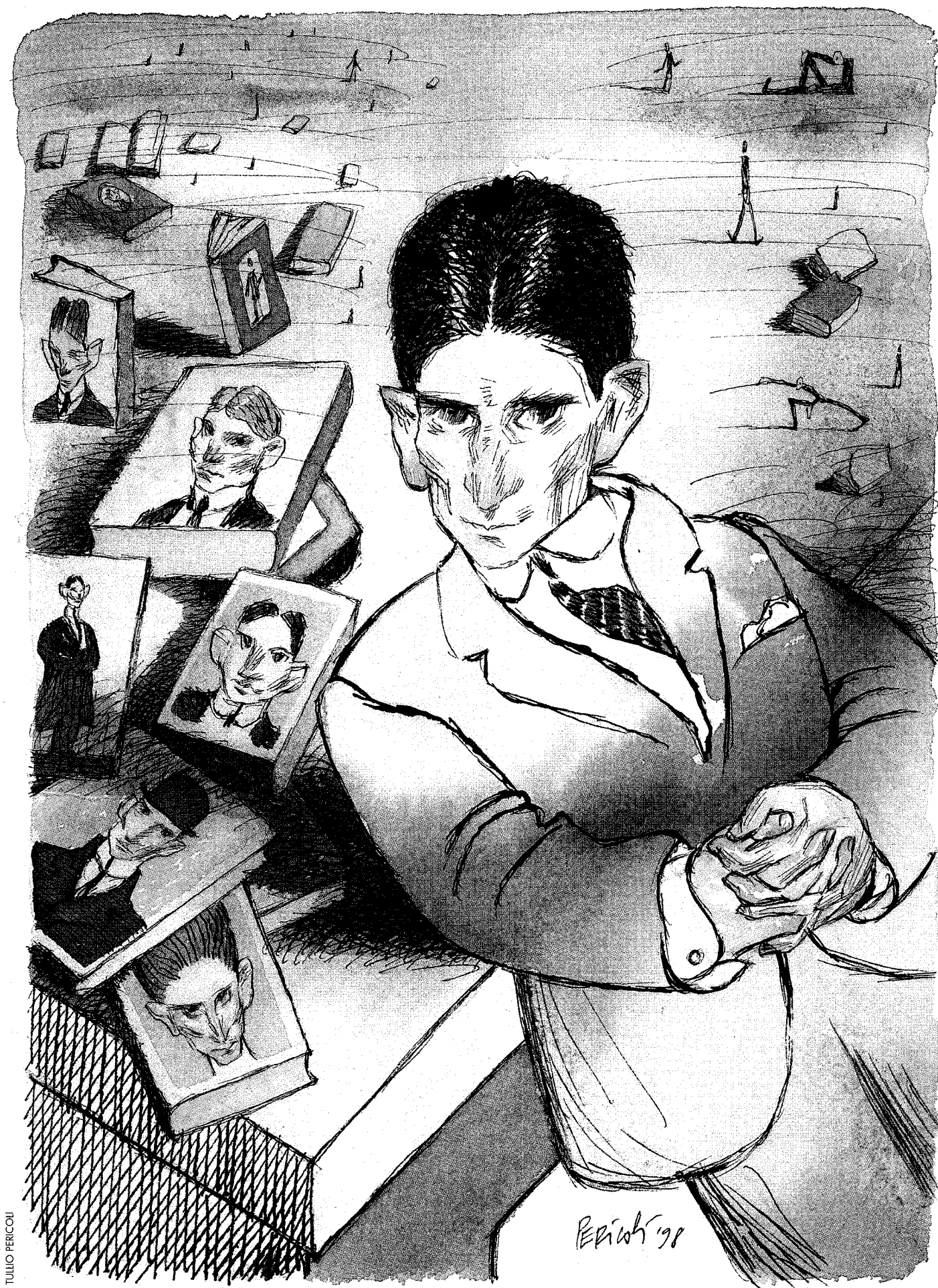
And what is it that Kafka himself knew? He was born in 1883; he died, of tuberculosis, in 1924, a month short of his forty-first birthday. He did not live to see human beings degraded to the status and condition of vermin eradicated by an insecticidal gas. If he was able to imagine man reduced to insect, it was not because he was prophetic. Writers, even the geniuses among them, are not seers. It was his own status and condition that Kafka knew. His language was German, and that, possibly, is the point. That Kafka breathed and thought and aspired and suffered in German—and in Prague, a German-hating city—may be the ultimate exegesis of everything he wrote.

The Austro-Hungarian monarchy, ruled by German-speaking Hapsburgs

until its dissolution in the First World War, was an amalgam of a dozen national enclaves. Czech-speaking Bohemia was one of these, restive and sometimes rebellious under Hapsburg authority. The struggle for Czech language rights was at times especially turbulent. Prague's German minority, aside from the linguistic advantage it enjoyed, was prominent both commercially and intellectually. Vienna, Berlin, Munich—these pivotal seats of German culture might be far away, but Prague, Bohemia's major city, reflected them all. Here Kafka attended a German university, studied German jurisprudence, worked for a German insurance company, and published in German periodicals. German influence was dominant; in literature it was conspicuous. The Jews of Prague were, by language and preference, German-identified—a minority population within a minority population. There were good reasons for this preference. Beginning with the Edict of Toleration, in 1782, and continuing over the next seventy years, the Hapsburg emperors had throughout their territories released the Jews from lives of innumerable restrictions in closed ghettos; emancipation meant civil freedoms, including the right to marry at will, to settle in the cities and enter the trades and professions. Ninety per cent of Bohemia's Jewish children were educated in German. As a youngster, Kafka had a Czech tutor, but in his academically rigorous German elementary school thirty of the thirty-nine boys in his class were Jews. For Bohemian patriots, Prague's Jews bore a double stigma: they were Germans, resented as cultural and national intruders, and they were Jews. Though the Germans were as unfriendly to the German-speaking Jews as the Czechs were, militant Czech nationalism targeted both groups.

Nor was modern Czech anti-Semitism without its melancholy history. Anti-Jewish demonstrations broke out in 1848, when the Jews were granted civil rights, and again in 1859, in 1861, and in 1866. (In Hungary, in 1883, the year of Kafka's birth, a blood-libel charge—a medieval canard accusing Jews of the ritual murder of a Christian child—brought on renewed hostility.) In 1897, the year after Kafka's bar-mitzvah observance, when he was fourteen, he was witness to a ferocious

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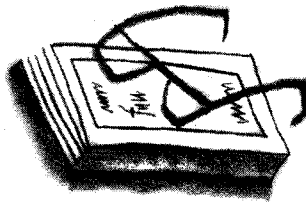
TULLIO PERICOI

outbreak of anti-Jewish violence which had begun as an anti-German protest. Mark Twain, reporting from Vienna on the parliamentary wrangling, described conditions in Prague: "There were three or four days of furious rioting . . . the Jews and Germans were harried and plundered, and their houses destroyed; in other Bohemian towns there was rioting—in some cases the Germans being the rioters, in others the Czechs—and in all cases the Jew had to roast, no matter which side he was on." In Prague itself, mobs looted Jewish businesses, smashed windows, vandalized synagogues, and assaulted Jews on the street. Because Kafka's father, a burly man, could speak Czech and had Czech employees in the sundries shop he ran—he

called them his "paid enemies," to his son's chagrin—his goods and his livelihood were spared. Less than two years later, just before Easter Sunday in 1899, a teen-age Czech girl was found dead, and the blood libel was revived once more; it was the future mayor of Prague who led the countrywide anti-Jewish agitation. Yet hatred was pervasive even when violence was dormant. And in 1920, when Kafka was thirty-seven, with scarcely three years to live and "The Castle" still unwritten, anti-Jewish rioting again erupted in Prague. "I've spent all afternoon out in the streets bathing in Jew-hatred," Kafka wrote in a letter contemplating fleeing the city. "*Prašive plemeno*—filthy brood—is what I heard them call the Jews. Isn't it only natural to leave a place where one is so bitterly hated? . . . The heroism involved in staying put in spite of it all is the heroism of the cockroach, which also won't be driven out of the bathroom." On that occasion, Jewish archives were destroyed and the Torah scrolls of Prague's ancient Altneu synagogue were burned. Kafka did not need to be, in the premonitory sense, a seer; as an observer of his own time and place, he saw. And what he saw was that, as a Jew in Central Europe, he was not at home; and though innocent of any wrongdoing he was thought to deserve punishment.

INEXPLICABLY, it has become a commonplace of Kafka criticism to overlook nearly altogether the social roots of the psychological predicaments animating Kafka's fables. To an extent, there is

justice in this disregard. Kafka's genius will not lend itself to merely local apprehensions; it cannot be reduced to a scarring by a hurtful society. At the other extreme, his stories are frequently addressed as faintly Christological allegories about the search for "grace," in the manner of a scarier "Pilgrim's Progress." It is true that there is not a word about Jews—and little about Prague—in Kafka's formal writing, which may account for the dismissal of any inquisitiveness about Kafka's Jewishness as a "parochialism" to be avoided. Kafka himself is said to have avoided it. But he was less assimilated (itself an ungainly notion) than some of his readers wish or imagine him to have been. Kafka's self-made, coarsely practical father



was the son of an impoverished kosher butcher, and had begun peddling meat in peasant villages while he was still a child. Kafka's middle-class mother was descended from an eminent Talmud scholar. Almost all his friends were Jewish literati. Kafka was seriously attracted to Zionism and Palestine, to Hebrew, to the pathos and inspiration of an Eastern European Yiddish theatre troupe that landed in Prague: these were for him the vehicles of a historic transcendence that cannot be crammed into the term "parochial." Glimmerings of this transcendence seep into the stories, usually by way of their negation. "We are nihilistic thoughts that come into God's head," Kafka told Max Brod, the dedicated friend who preserved the unfinished body of his work. In all Kafka's fictions, the Jewish anxieties of Prague press on, invisibly, subliminally; their fate is metamorphosis.

BUT Prague was not Kafka's only subterranean torment. The harsh, crushing, uncultivated father, for whom the business drive was everything, hammered at the mind of the obsessively susceptible son, for whom literature was everything. Yet the adult son remained in the parental flat for years, writing through the night, dreading noise, interruption, and mockery. At the family table, the son sat in concentration, diligently Fletcherizing his food, chewing each mouthful a dozen times. He took up vegetarianism, gymnastics, carpentry, and gardening, and repeatedly went on health retreats, once to a nudist spa. He fell into a stormy,

fitfully interrupted, but protracted engagement to Felice Bauer, a pragmatic manufacturing executive in Berlin, and when he withdrew from it felt like a felon before a tribunal. His job at the Workmen's Accident Insurance Institute (where he was a token Jew) instructed him in the whims of contingency and in the mazy machinery of bureaucracy. When his lungs became infected, he referred to his spasms of cough as "the animal." In his last hours, pleading with his doctor for morphine, he said, "Kill me, or else you are a murderer"—a final conflagration of Kafkan irony.

BELOW all this travail, some of it self-inflicted, lay the indefatigable clawings of language. In a letter to Brod, Kafka described Jews who wrote in German (he could hardly exclude himself) as trapped beasts: "Their hind legs were still stuck in parental Judaism while their forelegs found no purchase on new ground." They lived, he said, with three impossibilities—"the impossibility of not writing, the impossibility of writing German, the impossibility of writing differently. You could add," he concluded, "a fourth impossibility, the impossibility of writing."

The impossibility of writing *German*? Kafka's German—his mother tongue—is spare, sombre, comic, lucid, pure; formal without being stilted. It has the almost platonic purity of a language unintruded on by fads or slang or the street, geographically distanced from the tumultuous bruising of the mean vernacular. The Hebrew poetry written by the Jews of medieval Spain was similarly immaculate: its capital city was not Toledo but the Bible. In the same way, Kafka's linguistic capital was not German-speaking Prague on the margins of empire but European literature itself. Language was the engine and the chief motive of his life: hence "the impossibility of not writing."

"I've often thought that the best way of life for me would be to have writing materials and a lamp in the innermost room of a spacious locked cellar," he ruminated to Felice Bauer. When he spoke of the impossibility of writing German, he never meant that he was not a master of the language; his wish was to be consecrated to it, like a monk with his beads. His fear was that he was not entitled to German—not that the language did not belong to him but that he did not be-

long to it. German was both hospitable and inhospitable. He did not feel innocently—uncomplicatedly, unself-consciously—German. Put it that Kafka wrote German with the passion of an ingenious yet stealthy translator, always aware of the space, however minute, between his fear, or call it his idea of himself, and the deep ease of at-homeness that is every language's consolation. *Mutter*, the German word for "mother," was, he said, alien to him: so much for the taken-for-granted intimacy and trust of *die Muttersprache*, the mother tongue. This crevice of separation, no thicker than a hair, may underlie the estrangement and the enfeebling distortions that shock and ultimately disorient every reader of Kafka.

BUT if there is, in fact, a crevice—or a crisis—of separation between the psyche and its articulation in Kafka himself, what of the crevice that opens between Kafka and his translators? If Kafka deemed it impossible to be Kafka, what chance can a translator have to snare a mind so elusive that it escapes even the comprehension of its own sensibility? "I really am like rock, like my own tombstone," Kafka mourned. He believed himself to be "apathetic, witless, fearful," and also "servile, sly, irrelevant, impersonal, unsympathetic, untrue... from some ultimate diseased tendency." He vowed that "every day at least one line shall be directed against myself." He wrote, "I am constantly trying to communicate something incommunicable, to explain something inexplicable. Basically it is nothing other than... fear spread to everything, fear of the greatest as of the smallest, fear, paralyzing fear of pronouncing a word, although this fear may not only be fear but also a longing for something greater than all that is fearful." A panic so intuitional suggests—forces on us—still another Kafkan impossibility: the impossibility of translating Kafka.

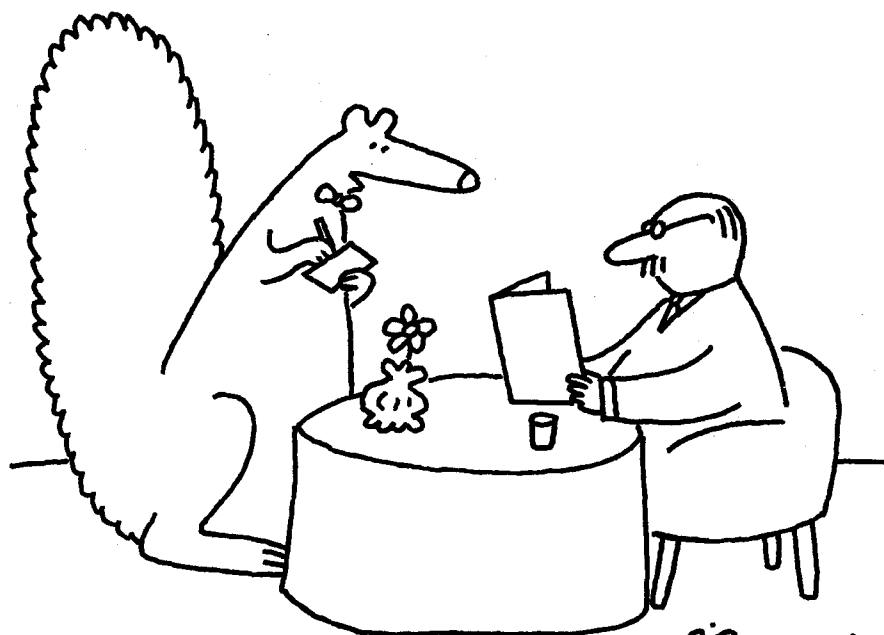
There is also the impossibility of *not* translating Kafka. An unknown Kafka, inaccessible, mute, secret, locked away, may be unthinkable. But it was once thinkable, and by Kafka himself. At the time of his death, the bulk of his writing was still unpublished. His famous directive (famously unheeded) to Max Brod to destroy his manuscripts—they were to be "burned unread"—could not have

foreseen their canonization, or the near canonization of their translators. For almost seventy years, the work of Willa and Edwin Muir, a Scottish couple self-taught in German, has represented Kafka in English; the mystical Kafka we are long familiar with—and whom the Muirs derived from Max Brod—reflects their voice and vision. It was they who gave us "Amerika," "The Trial," "The Castle," and nine-tenths of the stories. And it is because the Muirs toiled to communicate the incommunicable that Kafka, even in English, stands indisputably among the few truly indelible writers of the twentieth century—those writers who have no literary progeny, who are sui generis and cannot be echoed or envied.

Yet any translation, however influential, harbors its own dissolution. Literature endures; translation, itself a branch of literature, decays. This is no enigma. The permanence of a work does not insure the permanence of its translation—perhaps because the original remains fixed and unalterable, while the translation must inevitably vary with the changing cultural outlook and idiom of each succeeding generation. Then are the Muirs, in their various redactions, dated? Ought they to be jettisoned? Is their "sound" not ours? Or, more particularly, is their sound, by virtue of not being precisely ours, therefore not sufficiently Kafka's? After all, it is Kafka's sound we want to hear, not the nineteen-thirties prose effects of a pair of zealous Britishers.

Notions like these, and also the pressures of renewal and contemporaneity, including a concern for greater accuracy, may account for a pair of fresh English renderings, published in 1998: "The Trial," translated by Breon Mitchell, and "The Castle," the work of Mark Harman. (Both versions have been brought out by Schocken, an early publisher of Kafka. Formerly a German firm that fled the Nazi regime for Palestine and New York, it is now returned to its origin, so to speak, through having recently been purchased by Germany's Bertelsmann.) Harman faults the Muirs for theologizing Kafka's prose beyond what the text can support. Mitchell argues more stringently that "in attempting to create a readable and stylistically refined version" of "The Trial" the Muirs "consistently overlooked or deliberately varied the repetitions and interconnections that echo so meaningfully in the ear of every attentive reader of the German text." For instance, Mitchell points out, the Muirs shy away from repeating the word "assault" ("*überfallen*"), and choose instead "seize," "grab," "fall upon," "overwhelm," "waylay"—thereby subverting Kafka's brutally intentional refrain. Where Kafka's reiterated blow is powerful and direct, Mitchell claims, theirs is dissipated by variety.

But this is not an argument that can be decided only on the ground of textual faithfulness. The issues that seize, grab, fall upon, overwhelm, or waylay



"You'll never go wrong with sunflower seeds."

translation are not matters of language in the sense of word-for-word. Nor is translation to be equated with interpretation; the translator has no business sneaking in what amounts to commentary. Ideally, translation is a transparent membrane that will vibrate with the faintest shudder of the original, like a single leaf on an autumnal stem. Translation is autumnal: it comes late, it comes afterward. Especially with Kafka, the role of translation is not to convey "meaning," psychoanalytical or theological, or anything that can be summarized or paraphrased. Against such expectations, Walter Benjamin magisterially notes, Kafka's parables "raise a mighty paw." Translation is transmittal of that which may be made out of language, but is a condition beyond the grasp of language.

THE TRIAL is just such a condition. It is a narration of being and becoming. The title in German, "Der Prozess," expresses something ongoing, evolving, unfolding, driven on by its own forward movement—a process and a passage. Josef K., a well-placed bank official, a man of reason, sanity, and logic, is arrested, according to the Muirs, "without having done anything wrong"—or, as Breon Mitchell has it, "without having done anything truly wrong." At first, K. feels his innocence with the confidence, and even the arrogance, of self-belief. But through the course of his entanglement with the web of the law he drifts sporadically from confusion to resignation, from bewilderment in the face of an unnamed accusation to acceptance of an unidentifiable guilt. The legal proceedings that capture K. and draw him into their inescapable vortex are revealed as a series of implacable obstacles presided over by powerless or irrelevant functionaries. With its recondite judges and inscrutable rules, the "trial" is more tribulation than tribunal. Its impartiality is punishing: it tests no evidence; its judgment has no relation to justice. The law (an "unknown system of jurisprudence") is not a law that K. can recognize, and the court's procedures have an "Alice in Wonderland" arbitrariness. A room for flogging miscreants is situated in a closet in K.'s own office; the court holds sessions in the attics of run-down tenements; a painter is an authority on judicial method. Wherever K. turns, advice and indifference come to the same.

"It's not a trial before the normal court," K. (in Mitchell's translation) informs the out-of-town uncle who sends him to a lawyer. The lawyer is bedridden and virtually useless. He makes a point of displaying an earlier client who is as despairing and obsequious as a beaten dog. The lawyer's maidservant, seducing K., warns him, "You can't defend yourself against this court, all you can do is confess." Titorelli, the painter who lives and works in a tiny bedroom that proves to be an adjunct of the court, is surrounded by an importuning chorus of phantom-like but aggressive little girls; they, too, "belong to the court." The painter lectures K. on the ubiquity and inaccessibility of the court, the system's accumulation of files and its avoidance of proof, the impossibility of acquittal. "A single hangman could replace the entire court," K. protests. "I'm not guilty," he tells a priest in a darkened and empty cathedral. "That's how guilty people always talk," the priest replies, and explains that "the proceedings gradually merge into the judgment." Yet K. still dimly hopes: perhaps the priest will "show him . . . not how to influence the trial, but how to break out of it, how to get around it, how to live outside the trial."

Instead, the priest recites a parable: Kafka's famed parable of the doorkeeper. Behind a door standing open is the Law; a man from the country asks to be admitted. (In Jewish idiom, which Kafka may be alluding to here, a "man from the country"—*am ha'aretz*—connotes an unrefined sensibility impervious to spiritual learning.) The doorkeeper denies him immediate entrance, and the man waits stoically for years for permission to go in. Finally, dying, still outside the door, he asks why "no one but me has requested admittance." The doorkeeper answers, "No one else could gain admittance here, because this entrance was meant solely for you. I'm going to go and shut it now." Torrents of interpretation have washed over this fable, and over every other riddle embedded in the body of "The Trial." The priest himself, from within the tale, supplies a commentary on all possible commentaries: "The commentators tell us: the correct understanding of a matter and misunderstanding the matter are not mutually exclusive." And adds, "The text is immutable, and the opinions are often only an expression of despair over it." Following which,



DESIRE Diana Rigg and Toby Stephens



...rtray a queen and her stepson in the Almeida Theatre Company staging of Racine's "Phèdre," now at BAM. Photograph by Dudley Reed.

K. acquiesces in the ineluctable verdict. He is led to a block of stone in a quarry, where he is stabbed, twice, in the heart—after feebly attempting to raise the knife to his own throat.

Kafka's text is by now held to be immutable, despite much posthumous handling. Translations of the work (supposing that all translations are indistinguishable from opinions) are often only expressions of despair; understanding and misunderstanding may occur in the same breath. And "The Trial" is, after all, not a finished book. It was begun in 1914, weeks after the outbreak of the First World War. Kafka recorded this cataclysm in his diary, in a tone of flat dismissal: "August 2. Germany has declared war on Russia.—Swimming in the afternoon," and on August 21st he wrote, "I start 'The Trial' again." He picked it up and left it off repeatedly that year and the next. Substantial fragments—unincorporated scenes—were set aside, and it was Max Brod who, after Kafka's death, determined the order of the chapters. Brod's allegorical reflections on Kafka's aims strongly influenced the Muirs. Discussion continues about the looseness of Kafka's punctuation—commas freely and unconventionally scattered. (The Muirs, following Brod, regulate the liberties taken in the original.) Kafka's translators, then, are confronted with textual decisions large and small that were never Kafka's. To these they add their own.

The Muirs pursue a dignified prose, unruffled by any obvious idiosyncrasy; their cadences lean toward a formality tintured by a certain soulfulness. Breon Mitchell's intent is radically other. To illustrate, let me try a small experiment in contrast and linguistic ambition. In the novel's penultimate paragraph, as K. is brought to the place of his execution, he sees a window in a nearby building fly open and a pair of arms reach out. The Muirs translate: "Who was it? A friend? A good man? Someone who sympathized? Someone who wanted to help? Was it one person only? Or was it mankind? Was help at hand?" The same simple phrases in Mitchell's rendering have a different timbre, even when some of the words are identical: "Who was it? A friend? A good person? Someone who cared? Someone who wanted to help? Was it just one person? Was it everyone? Was there still help?" The Muirs' "Was help at hand?" has a Dickensian flavor: a touch of nineteenth-century purple. And

"mankind" is not what Kafka wrote (he wrote "*alle*"—"everyone"), though it may be what he meant; in any case, it is what the Muirs, who look to symbolism, distinctly do mean. To our contemporary ears, "Was it one person only?"—with "only" placed after the noun—is vaguely stilted. And surely some would find "a good man" (for "*ein guter Mensch*," where "*Mensch*" signifies the essential human being) sexist and politically incorrect. What we hear in the Muirs' language, over all, is something like the voice of Somerset Maugham: British; cultivated; cautiously genteel even in extremis; middlebrow.

Breon Mitchell arrives to sweep all that Muirish dustiness away, and to refresh Kafka's legacy by giving us a handier Kafka in a vocabulary close to our own—an American Kafka, in short. He has the advantage of working with a restored and more scholarly text, which edits out many of Brod's interferences. Yet, even in so minuscule a passage as the one under scrutiny, a telltale syllable, therapeutically up to date, jumps out: Americans may be sympathetic ("*teilnahm*"), but mainly they *care*. Other current Americanisms intrude: "you'd better believe it" (the Muirs say, tamely, "you can believe that"); "without letting myself be thrown by the fact that Anna didn't appear" (the Muirs: "without troubling my head about Anna's absence"); "I'm so tired I'm about to drop"; "you'd have to be a serious criminal to have a commission of inquiry come down on you"; "You're not mad at me, are you?"; "fed up"; and so forth. There is even a talk-show "more importantly." Mitchell's verb contractions ("isn't," "didn't") blanket Kafka's grave exchanges with a mist of "Seinfeld" dialogue. If the Muirs sometimes write like sticks, Mitchell now and then writes shtick. In both versions, the force of the original claws its way through, despite the foreign gentility of the one and the colloquial unbuttonedness of the other. Unleashed by Kafka's indefinable genius, unreasonable-reason slouches into view under a carapace of ill-fitting English.

OF the hundred theories of translation, some lyrical, some stultifyingly academic, others philologically abstruse, the speculations of three extraordinary literary figures stand out: Vladimir Nabokov, José Ortega y Gasset, and Walter Benjamin. Nabokov, speaking of Pushkin, demands "translations with copious

footnotes, footnotes reaching up like skyscrapers. . . . I want such footnotes and the absolutely literal sense." This, of course, is pugnaciously anti-literary, and is Nabokov's curmudgeonly warning against the "drudge" who substitutes "easy platitudes for the breathtaking intricacies of the text." It is, besides, a statement of denial and disbelief: no translation is ever going to work, so please don't try. Ortega's milder disbelief is finally tempered by aspiration. "Translation is not a duplicate of the original text," he begins; "it is not—it shouldn't try to be—the work itself with a different vocabulary." And he concludes, "The simple fact is that the translation is not the work, but a path toward the work"—which suggests at least the possibility of arrival.

Benjamin withdraws altogether from these views. He will believe in the efficacy of translation as long as it is not of this earth, and only if the actual act of translation—by human hands—cannot be accomplished. A German Jew and a contemporary of Kafka, a Hitler refugee, a suicide, he is eerily close to Kafka in mind and sensibility; on occasion he expresses characteristically Kafkan ideas. In his remarkable 1923 essay "The Task of the Translator," he imagines a high court of language that has something in common with the invisible hierarchy of judges in "The Trial." "The translatability of linguistic creations," he affirms, "ought to be considered even if men should prove unable to translate them." Here is Platonism incarnate: the nonexistent ideal is perfect; whatever is attempted in the world of reality is an imperfect copy, falls short, and is useless. Translation, according to Benjamin, is debased when it delivers information, or enhances knowledge, or offers itself as a trot or as a version of Cliffs Notes, or as a help to understanding, or as any other kind of convenience. "Translation must in large measure refrain from wanting to communicate something, from rendering the sense," he maintains. Comprehension, elucidation, the plain import of the work—all that is the goal of the inept. "Meaning is served far better—and literature and language far worse—by the unrestrained license of bad translators."

What is Benjamin talking about? If the object of translation is not meaning, what is it? Kafka's formulation for literature is Benjamin's for translation: the intent to communicate the incommunicable, to explain the inexplicable. "To some

degree," Benjamin continues, "all great texts contain their potential translation between the lines; this is true to the highest degree of sacred writings." And, yet another time, "In all language and linguistic creations there remains in addition to what can be conveyed something that cannot be communicated... that very nucleus of pure language." Then woe to the carpentry work of real translators facing real texts! Benjamin is scrupulous and difficult, and his intimations of ideal translation cannot easily be paraphrased: they are, in brief, a longing for transcendence, a wish equivalent to the wish that the translators of the Psalmist in the King James version, say, might come again, and in our own generation. (But would they be fit for Kafka?)

Benjamin is indifferent to the exigencies of carpentry and craft. What he is insisting on is what Kafka understood by the impossibility of writing German: the unbridgeable fissure between words and the spells they cast. Always for

Kafka, behind meaning there shivers an intractable darkness or (rarely) an impenetrable radiance. And the task of the translator, as Benjamin intuitively it, is not within the reach of the conscientious, if old-fashioned, Muirs, or the highly readable Breon Mitchell, whose "Trial" is a page-turner (and whose glistening contemporaneity may cause his work to fade faster than theirs). Both the superseded Muirs and the eminently useful Mitchell convey information, meaning, complexity, "atmosphere." How can one ask for more, and, given the sublime necessity of reading Kafka in English, what, practically, is "more"? Our debt to the translators we have is unfathomable. But a look into Kafka's simplest sentences—"Wer war es? Ein Freund? Ein guter Mensch? ... Waren es alle?"—points to Benjamin's nearly liturgical plea for "that very nucleus of pure language" which Kafka called the impossibility of writing German; and which signals also, despairingly, the impossibility of translating Kafka. ♦

FRESH HELL

A new novel annihilates celebrity.

BY ALEX ROSS

ONE of the passing delights of "Glamo-rama" (Knopf; \$25), the new high-fashion thriller by Bret Easton Ellis, is to imagine how scholars of postmodern fiction will explain it a century hence. It's the story of a young male model who tries to achieve stardom in New York, and nearly everyone who is even marginally famous at this moment is named somewhere in its pages. If the works of Ellis happen to achieve some sliver of immortality—and they may have as good a chance as several better-reviewed, duller-minded rivals—they will require some pretty



Bret Easton Ellis

laccio, Whitfield Crane, John Cusack, Dean Cain, Jim Courier, Roger Clemens, Russell Crowe, Tia Carrere and Helena

fearsome annotations, next to which "Allusions in 'Ulysses'" will have the relative heft of a Hamptons bus brochure. Consider this bit of dialogue, in which various Ellis characters are going over the guest list for the opening of a night club in New York City:

"Naomi Campbell, Helena Christensen, Cindy Crawford, Sheryl Crow, David Charvet, Courtney Cox, Harry Connick, Jr., Francisco Clemente, Nick Constantine, Zoe Casavetes, Nicolas Cage, Thomas Calabro, Cristi Conway, Bob Col-

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Bonham Carter—but I'm not sure if she should be under *B* or *C*."

In the future, scholars specializing in the eighties art market will be able to identify Francisco Clemente, movie buffs may know the name Nicolas Cage, and Red Sox fans, still waiting to win the World Series, will cling to the memory of Roger Clemens. All these other people are going to need footnotes. Who was David Charvet? He was on "Baywatch." What was "Baywatch"? A television show in which people ran around in Day-Glo swimsuits. What was Day-Glo? "Dude, Daddy-O," one twenty-second-century student will say to another, picking up the lingo of the period. "I'm way behind on the reading for the Ellis class. What is the significance of Courtney Cox?"

"Glamorama" is filigreed with lists of names. It is a Domesday Book of second- and third-tier American celebrity—of the "quasi-famous" and the "semi-noted," as Ellis refers to them. The lists carry forward the information-overload tactic of Ellis's 1991 novel "American Psycho," which mixed scenes of serial-killer violence with descriptions of stereo components and shav-ing paraphernalia. The names blur and blend into a strangely pleasant hum. As if to test our attentiveness, Ellis occasionally throws in names that don't belong: the Princess of Wales continues to attend parties after death, and David Koresh chats at Indochine with Peter Gabriel, David LaChapelle, and Janeane Garofalo. Celebrities wander into and out of conversation with fictional characters. The author has a weakness for cute guys who haven't done anything: Skeet Ulrich, Stephen Dorff, Christian Bale. ("Why are these people stars?" someone plaintively cries out.) The quasi-famous are the furnishings of this novel: they take up space in the same way that arm-chairs and ottomans and hat stands fill the pages of nineteenth-century fiction. Since the major characters are as familiar-seeming and insubstantial as the minor celebrities they consort with, Ellis pulls off a fascinating trick: the border between the famous and the fictional disappears. Skeet Ulrich, after a few appearances, becomes

a Bret Easton Ellis creation, and you have to remind yourself that he does, in fact, exist.

OUR hero is rather like the heroes of Ellis's books in the past: he is a blank young man who goes to parties. The difference is that this one—named Victor Ward—is not in command of his world: he does not speak for the author, as did the watchful, disaffected narrator of "Less Than Zero," nor is he a masked villain, like the appalling Patrick Bateman, in "American Psycho." Victor is handsome, dumb, and doomed. In the gleefully vicious New York chapters, he goes about playing in his dumb band and auditioning for dumb movies ("Flatliners II") and designing his dumb night club. He has not been famous long, and he is already being slandered and humiliated. He makes his living as a model, and he exists as a flavor of the month on different people's calendars. In one scene, he is being photographed with a clutch of men in shorts. The photographer calls his subjects "my little minnows" and shouts exquisitely degrading instructions at them:

"Dance around and yell 'pussy.'"
 "Pussy," we all mumble.
 "Louder!" Didier shouts.
 "Pussy!"
 "Louder!"
 "Pussy!"
 "Fantastic yet not so good."

Victor, alas, is destined for a worse fate than a meteoric career in underwear. He is beginning to be hunted by forces he cannot see or name. He seems to have a doppelgänger, who moves in the same circles, gets himself photographed with various competing girlfriends, and jeopardizes an already questionable reputation. The night club is a fiasco, thugs hound him, and he flees to Europe on the QE2.

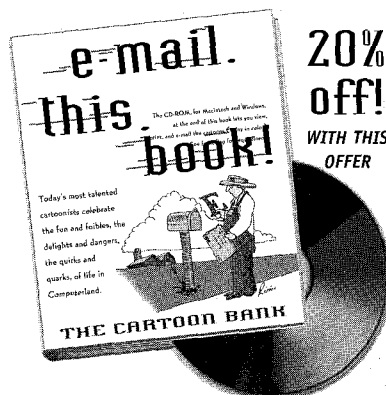
And at this point the story begins to slip and slide: the novel of fashion turns into a deliberately clichéd and disorganized novel of intrigue. Victor falls in with a group of terrorist models who are blowing up fashionable cafés and putting bombs on airplanes. There are film crews in the background, with multiple directors working from multiple scripts. Characters from Ellis's past novels make cameo appearances. (Pat-

rick Bateman is alive and well.) The book begins to be punctuated with scenes of elaborate violence. The meta-narrative devices assist in the atmosphere of panic and collapse around Victor: this is a fundamentally melancholy tale of a boy-man who loses every aspect of his identity, from his sexual orientation (which is spectacularly shattered by a rival model) to his name (which is eventually taken over by the doppelgänger in New York). The book seems to go insane while you're reading it, but Ellis doesn't fear the appearance of chaos. He invents a fresh hell on every page.

Through all this mayhem, the style remains mysteriously elegant. No matter how trivial or horrible the theme, the prose purrs along with a minimum of punctuation and a maximum of monosyllables. Ellis has learned much from the legendary underground novelist Dennis Cooper, particularly in the deadpan use of sex and violence. Yet "Glamorama" is something more than an exercise in deconstruction: for the first time since his richly layered college novel, "The Rules of Attraction," Ellis has written a book that goes from A to B instead of dwelling in a handsome stupor on A. Where we end up—where on earth B might be—is a puzzle, but the final scenes of "Glamorama" are haunting. At the end, the doppelgänger is acting out a duller, happier version of Victor's life in New York while Victor himself is awaiting his presumably violent end in a hotel in Milan. He remembers the day in Miami when he felt himself on the verge of fame: "The future started mapping itself out and I focused on it. In that moment I felt as if I was disappearing from poolside in the villa on Ocean Drive and I was floating above the palm trees, growing smaller in the wide blank sky until I no longer existed."

"Glamorama" records that journey into nonexistence. On the last page, there's a hint that poor Victor could discover something more: he is looking at a painting of a mountain, and, for practically the first time in the book, there is a solid, durable image—one that will not have to be noted in encyclopedias of obsolete pop culture. But the blank space at the bottom of the last page lets us know that the end has come to Victor. He never knew what hit him. ♦

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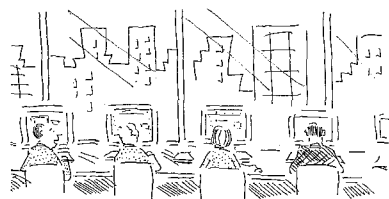
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BRIEFLY NOTED

MARA AND DANN, by Doris Lessing (Harper-Flamingo; \$25). In this futuristic novel, in Ifrik, a land savaged by war and environmental disaster, seven-year-old Mara and her little brother Dann are snatched from their home and severed from their pasts. The children grow up literally on the run, made to fight for their enemies one moment and left to starve the next. But their love for each other remains as fierce as their surroundings are terrifying, and it transfigures their brutal trials. On the surface a grand adventure, this novel at its heart makes a fascinating argument for the force of affection and the power of the questioning mind.

BLOOD: AN EPIC HISTORY OF MEDICINE AND COMMERCE, by Douglas Starr (Knopf; \$27.50). This rewarding book, filled with sharp science, has everything from a brief survey of bloodletting to an account of the massive mobilization of donated blood for the Allied invasion of Normandy. But its real subject is the postwar rise of the "blood-services complex," which controls the global market for blood products. Starr concludes with an evenhanded study of the policies that allowed half of this country's hemophiliac population to be infected with AIDS.

VISIONS OF JAZZ, by Gary Giddins (Oxford; \$35). A remarkably nonideological critic, Giddins has long demonstrated a passion for jazz in all its guises: this big book is the capstone of two and a half decades of writing on the subject. Alongside his virtuoso considerations of Ellington, Monk, Mingus, and the predictable greats, Giddins illuminates the contributions to be found in the likes of Al Jolson's minstrel posing and Stan Kenton's florid kitsch. His writing, like the music he loves, is joyously polyphonic, with history, legend, musicology, biography, and performance all rising out of the mix.

THE JEW OF NEW YORK, by Ben Katchor (Pantheon; \$20). In 1825, a New Yorker named Mordecai Noah calls for the lost tribes of Israel to form a Jewish nation in upstate New York. Noah's mission fails, however, and five years later, as Katchor's comic strip begins, preparations are being made for a production of an anti-Semitic play based on that failure. Katchor's nineteenth-century carnival of hucksters and Cabalists and pilgrims is a delight: you feel that it is a work of singular, surreal vision, and at the same time that it must all be true.

THE RED ATLANTIS: COMMUNIST CULTURE IN THE ABSENCE OF COMMUNISM, by J. Hoberman (Temple; \$34.95). These essays, at once funny and heartbreaking, survey the work of Soviet and Eastern European artists, writers, and filmmakers. Hoberman is an expert (he teaches film at Cooper Union) gifted with high intellectual spirits, but he doesn't take cheap shots: he never lets us forget the pressures and dangers that affected even the most devoted Communists under Communism.

Slow down!



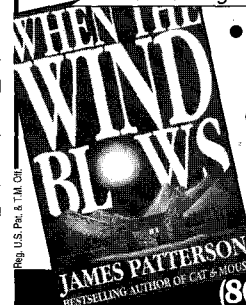
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THE ART WORLD



STILLED LIVES

The gravity of Duane Hanson's lumpen Americans.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

I LIKE the Duane Hanson retrospective at the Whitney about as much as I expected to—moderately—while being more impressed by it than I ever thought possible. It looks classic. On the strength of this show, a newcomer to art of the last four decades might decide that Hanson, who died three years ago, at the age of seventy, was a major artist. Art-world veterans know otherwise. The Floridian, fool-the-eye sculptor has perennially been viewed in avant-gardish circles as square and by conservative types as trashy. But guess what. In the saga of culture, the newcomer is always right. Veterans get few chances to change their tune before becoming bywords for yesterday's myopia.

Hanson was a third-dimensional illustrator of American ordinariness, a cool heir of Norman Rockwell. (Now, there's a name that used to curl any self-respecting art lover's lip; but of late the reputation of old Rockwell himself has been rising.) Hanson's life-size figures—cast directly from models and completed in polychromed fibreglass or bronze, and given real clothing and accessories—render lumpen types, such as a frumpishly dressed, obese, tired young woman laden with shopping bags from some mall. Educated culture usually satirizes such folks when it notices them at all. Hanson played them straight, with tacit mercy.

The glumly compassionate, Edward Hopperish human interest of Hanson's subjects once seemed to some observers—including me—the saving grace of a fairly unnecessary artistic project. Now, lo and behold, Hanson's work appears rock solid—dense with historical and aesthetic logic. Its emotional appeal has become the bonus or the crowning glory of a style that economically sums up much of what new art was most urgently about in recent times. If a bit of tawdriness still clings to Hanson's bravura

stunts, that's only natural for a Realist and a populist. Gustave Courbet, when you really look at his unquenchably energetic stuff, remains pretty tawdry, too.

Hanson, a favorite of collectors and popular audiences alike, wasn't exactly underrated while he lived. But he was excluded from serious ratings—scribbled into art-critical margins, a special case. Hanson exasperated orderly minds by, among other things, neglecting to take sides in the great nineteen-sixties artistic gang war between Pop art and Minimalism (which Minimalism won in art institutions, if not in a great many people's hearts). Hanson seemed to think that he could inhabit both mass culture and museum culture: Pop's demotic, feel-good insouciance and Minimalism's élitist, sit-up-straight rigor. And darned if he didn't go and do it.

A Hanson figure has far more in common with a halcyon Donald Judd box than either one has with previous sculptural conventions. We can see this clearly, now that Pop-versus-Minimal is a dead fight—and, more generally, now that pedantic distinctions between representation and abstraction seem trivial. Minimalism engineered an inside-out reversal of standard art experience. Instead of contemplating an object that is framed or pedestalled in otherworldly space, viewers are made self-conscious by an emphatic presence in their own space. To be more emphatically present than a Hanson, an art work would have to assault you bodily.

CERTAIN aspects of Hanson's art—slickness, darkness—point to the creative confidence and social chaos of the nineteen-sixties. He was a late bloomer from Minnesota, whose early work, which is sampled at the Whitney, ran to cheesy modernistic wood carvings. After several years of teaching art in Germany, Hanson moved to At-

lanta, in 1960, and to Miami five years later. Except for a four-year spell in New York, he spent the rest of his life in Florida. (In 1992, rustically enough, he was inducted into the Florida Artists Hall of Fame.) His first mature works were distraught political protests: a piece about illegal abortion; a walk-in race riot.

Those works (which have largely been excluded from the show) tended to be clunkers, but time has been surprisingly kind to one early Hanson indulgence in over-the-top shock, a piece called "Motorcycle Accident" (1967). Maybe it's because today's world makes shock connoisseurs of us all. (We aren't inured to grossness, perhaps, but instances of it don't invariably set us to flight, as they once did.) This misnamed sculpture, which incorporates a humble motor scooter, represents the corpse of a young man whose mid-section has been staved in. The crash happened a while ago, it appears. The victim looks dead in a clotted and glazed way, short of decay, that reminds me of deer I've seen lashed to the fenders of hunters' cars.

"Motorcycle Accident" feels angry about something, although what it might resent, other than poor driving, is hard to say. The work's most communicative tone is antic, double-dare temerity. The artist seems to have made it simply because he could, leaving art history to cope with his deed—as art history must, because I don't believe that viewers will ever tire of wondering about the piece. For one thing, as is true of all of Hanson's works, the aging of the subject's mode of dress, hair style, and other dated accoutrements effortlessly adds historical shading to grisly immediacy.

When Hanson hit his stride in the nineteen-seventies, it was with intensely individualized portraits of people who are practically anonymous by social compact: folks as common as dirt and intu-

itively accepting of the fact. The naked melancholies of a waitress, a policeman, a janitor, some carpenters, a pair of tourists, and so on do not evoke "un-guarded moments." They convey habitual moods of people so unaccustomed to being looked at, let alone scrutinized, that to be guarded never occurs to them. If they dress garishly and get fat, it may

deem the misfortune. The pathos of Hanson's characters is that they palpably take no joy from the distinctive personalities that we observe in them. The artist's procedure brings them to life. Against the odds, the viewer's gaze grants that life the little victory of a meaning.

Verisimilitude is an easy trick, given the human brain's hair-trigger penchant for crediting even far-fetched resemblances. Hanson's capacity for startlement needs no explanation, just as our enjoyment of double takes, a staple of comedy and melodrama, requires no defense. As it happened, I got whipsawed very little by the Whitney show. Only "Policeman" (1994) made me jump when I came upon it. I knew that Hanson's lower-class types had to be *objets d'art*, because their real-life counterparts do not visit fancy museums, but cops can pop up anywhere at any time, causing an instant, electric apprehension: something's wrong. The unenthusiastically vigilant mien of Hanson's man in blue reassures us that he sees nothing amiss—unless it's the whole sorry human lot, which law officers cannot be expected to address.

Encountering Hansons in a museum, one is perforce aware of one's part in the permanent drama of social caste. In the company of fellow-members of a lucky class, I stroll amid likenesses of drastically less privileged citizens. Familiar discomforts stir. But who's complaining? No one is even arguing. This is just art. There are only art consumers here (unless you insist on counting the guards). Except that, under the circumstances, art-consuming delectation, while handsomely enabled, keeps getting out of hand. Consciousness expands beyond the Whitney's clean, well-lighted spaces to absent, untidy, darker reckonings. Hanson did something that shows every sign of staying done. ♦



Hanson's "Young Shopper" (1973): Ordinary people turned into *objets d'art*.

be from a vague impulse to reinforce their stubborn existence as *things*—like that of highway barriers, whose strident design insures against anyone's running into them.

Of course, Hanson's figures really are things, of an elusive sort. "Sculpture" is not a word that comes easily to mind for them. Donald Judd's well-known term for his own pioneering Minimalist works—"specific objects"—recommends itself. For a human being, to seem an object is an outrage. It is tragic. To be, at any rate, something in particular may partly re-

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ON TELEVISION

THE SPORTING NEWS

The embattled networks need to give themselves a pep talk.

BY NANCY FRANKLIN

A COUPLE of weeks ago, while in the midst of a pleasant post-“Friends” afterglow, I was jolted out of my enjoyment by a voice that said, on the heels of the closing credits, “We want to know what you thought of this episode of ‘Friends,’” and then asked me to log on to NBC’s Web site for that very purpose. Actually, I was jolted out of my enjoyment of my enjoyment—I felt that I had been asked to worry about NBC, and I did worry. Why did they want to know what I thought? Don’t they know what *they* think? Of course, NBC, which, like the other networks, has been steadily losing its audience share in recent years, probably just wants me to think they “care” about me, thereby gaining my loyalty. (They also want me to look at their promos for other shows while I’m doing my patriotic viewerly duty on their Web site.) The networks have been forced to be ever more calculating in their wooing of the audience, and their efforts to win us over seem both pathetic and irritating, like the sight of a sweaty Peter Lorre character pleading for his life. When promoting reruns, NBC uses the kicker “If you haven’t seen it, it’s new to you.” This whiny come-on attempts to put an attractive face on the fact that reruns pop up more often—and much earlier in the season—than they used to, but wouldn’t NBC’s energy and money be better spent in creating more product instead of trying to justify its slim pickings? The networks used to want to convey an image of strength and confidence—like gladiators, they were always “battling” each other. “We’re No. 1!” a network might say, and I could believe it or not believe it, or just not care. Now I have to hear about their aches and pains and log on to their Web sites to make them feel better. Whether or not NBC really wants to know what I thought of that episode of “Friends,” I don’t want

them to want to know what I think. I have confidence in the writers and actors on “Friends”—why doesn’t NBC?

Of the three original networks, ABC has shown off its lameness most shamelessly. (CBS has so far avoided exhibiting its scars; don’t be surprised, though, if you see an ad someday that says, “We want to be known as the Tiffany Network again—but we need your help.”) For the last year, ABC has blanketed the country with an ad campaign that essentially characterizes TV and TV viewers as underachieving goof-offs. The ads make no claim for the quality of ABC’s offerings; instead, they point out what is at best only a neutral attribute: “Hello? It’s free.” Their boosterism aims low: “TV is good.” “Don’t just sit there. O.K., just sit there.” I know I’m supposed to be flattered by the gutsy postmodern sophistication involved in a billion-dollar company’s “admitting” the two-bit “truth” that it’s pandering to the lowest common denominator, but I decline their invitation to join the happy idiots’ club.

People may not care about networks, but they do care about TV shows (“It’s the shows, stupid”), and ABC should wake up and smell the coffee, for they have one of the season’s best new programs. “Sports Night,” which is about the people who work on a cable-TV show that resembles ESPN’s “SportsCenter,” was created by Aaron Sorkin, who wrote the play “A Few Good Men” and its movie version. Its director, Thomas Schlamme, has a track record that includes both A-list mainstream network shows (“Mad About You,” “Friends,” “E.R.”) and shows that don’t cast a wide net of attitude but instead grow out of a very particular point of view, notably “The Larry Sanders Show.” “Sports Night” seems to combine the best qualities of network and cable; it does roughly follow a formula, but it breathes. The characters don’t talk

like TV characters, although they do talk like people who have seen a lot of TV—they're extremely conscious of the way they use language. (They're also clearly smart and knowledgeable, but sometimes you wonder if they missed elementary school: in one episode, no one in the control room knew for sure whether Helsinki was in Finland.) The two anchors of the sports show, Dan Rydell (Josh Charles) and Casey McCall (Peter Krause), do talk a little bit like people on TV—they *are* on TV. Casey is the more voluble of the two, and he often sounds as if he were a play-by-play announcer for his own life. When an associate producer in the control room says something to him that's painfully loud, he says to her, "Natalie, if you shout into a microphone when I'm wearing an earpiece, it poses the question 'Is there a decibel level at which the human head'll just, you know, explode?'" One of the trademarks of "Sports Night," and one of its pleasures, is frequent rapid-fire exchanges that are meant to eliminate, but instead often create, confusion. In one episode, Casey and Dan are walking through the office and discussing the upcoming broadcast. Dan asks Casey if it's true that they have nine hockey segments on their show that night, and Casey says it is. Dan responds, "Jerome will be happy," and the exchange that follows is something out of "David Mamet Meets Abbott and Costello":

CASEY: Who's Jerome?
 DAN: Jerome.
 CASEY: Right.
 DAN: He'll be happy.
 CASEY: Yeah. Sure.
 Who is he?
 DAN: Jerome?
 CASEY: Right. Talking about Jerome. You can say his name as many times as you like, we're still not going to know who he is.
 DAN: Camera 2?
 CASEY: What about it?
 DAN: He's the camera operator.
 CASEY: Who?
 DAN: Are you prepared to do a broadcast right now?
 CASEY: Yeah.
 DAN: The camera guy?
 CASEY: What about him?
 DAN: It's Jerome.

Jerome is the camera operator on No. 2.

CASEY: And he likes hockey.

DAN: Now you're with it.

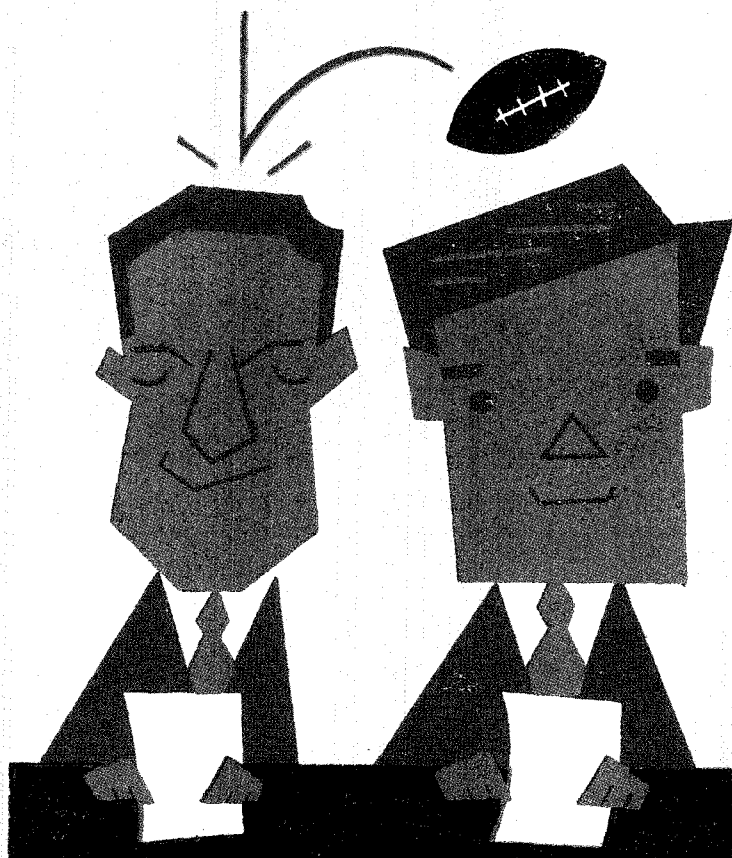
Casual and intense, obsessive and jaunty—this is a fair simulacrum of the way people talk at work, when they're up against deadlines and when their job constitutes about eighty per cent of their life. "Sports Night" is set entirely in the Manhattan studio and its offices—there have been no scenes at the characters' homes, or in bars or restaurants. It seems that no one ever actually goes home—except for Isaac (Robert Guillaume), the managing editor, who is the oldest character on the show and, of the six main characters, the only married one. And as much as the characters love their jobs—Dana (Felicity Huffman), the executive producer of the show within the show, talks about the "rush" she gets every night from doing the show—there is an undercurrent of sadness, which is part of the reason it's hard to characterize "Sports Night." Some of the sadness is located in the persons of Dan and Casey; although they do have a frat-boy, towel-snapping, high-five side to them, Josh Charles, who plays Dan, has a thoughtful, serious face that is older than his twenty-seven years, and while Peter

Krause's Casey is never at a loss for words, the words don't always seem to satisfy him.

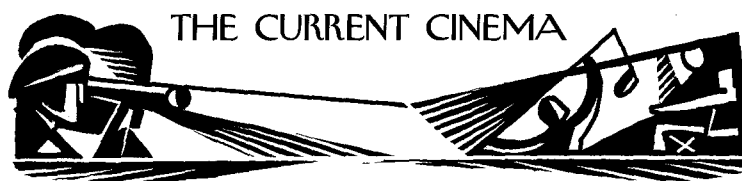
This aspect of the show—Is it funny? Is it *supposed* to be funny?—apparently poses a dilemma for ABC's promotional staff. On the part of its Web site devoted to "Sports Night," it regresses to simple-minded, *Tiger Beat* gushing, and invites people to vote for the "coolest" of the two anchors by clicking on a little circle next to "Dan is the man!" or "How do I spell cool? C-A-S-E-Y." Huffman, who is thirty-five and plays an accomplished professional, gets the bimbo treatment: "Who is Felicity Huffman's No. 1 fan? A recent visit to the set of 'Sports Night' would suggest it's her husband, 'Fargo' star William H. Macy. Call us romantics, but we couldn't help but notice the Obie Award-winning actress snuggling up to the Oscar-nominated actor between scenes. And why not?" In a September article in this magazine about the making of "Sports Night," Tad Friend wrote about the battle between Sorkin and ABC over whether or not the show would have a laugh track. It did end up with one, and though I've never registered the presence of a laugh track in some of my favorite sitcoms, I do notice

it in "Sports Night," because most of the humor isn't one-dimensionally laugh-out-loud funny; it runs fluidly and almost continuously through the show, and gives you a lot to think about—what was said, how it was said, what wasn't said, and what followed what was said. It does make me laugh out loud, but silently, to myself, inside my head.

"Sports Night" doesn't glorify sports or broadcasting (nor does it cynically trash them) but merely accepts that, for the characters on the show, their work, their office, is practically their entire universe. They may have great jobs, but, like most people in New York, they seem to be wondering whether it's too much to ask to have a life as well. ♦



Sensitive towel-snappers: Josh Charles and Peter Krause have a casual fluency, and good material, as Dan and Casey on "Sports Night."



THE CURRENT CINEMA

TOUGH CASES

The unsettling power of "Affliction," and "A Civil Action."

BY DAVID DENBY

WHEN we first hear about Wade Whitehouse (Nick Nolte)—the hero and victim of Paul Schrader's severely beautiful "Affliction"—we hear not from Wade himself but from his brother, Rolfe (Willem Dafoe), who narrates Wade's disastrous story with fluent, slightly sinister objectivity. "Affliction" is based on Russell Banks's 1989 novel, and the movie, like the book, is very clearly something *told*, an attempt to understand, from outside (but not too far outside), one of those obscure, even baffling incidents usually described in a newspaper article deposited at the bottom of the page: A seemingly normal man in some suburban or rural town has gone berserk and killed several people; he has then disappeared or killed himself. "Affliction" is a realistic fable set in Robert Frost country, the tragic northern New England of unappeasable snows. Rolfe, a Boston teacher, has done the sensible thing: he has retreated from the economically marginal town of Lawford, New Hampshire, and also from the violence that engulfs both Wade and the irascible father, Glen (James Coburn), who raised them and beat them both. But Rolfe has fallen into a state of disengagement in which he can do little but tell stories, and Willem Dafoe, whose voice seems to come from far away—he could be deep below the water, in a grotto—is almost creepily detached. In some ways, Rolfe is a more responsible version of earlier alienated Schrader characters—such men as Dafoe's anxiety-ridden but dreamy drug dealer in "Light Sleeper," or the aloof male hustler played by Richard Gere long ago in "American

Gigolo." But there has never been a Schrader character like Wade, a failure in his mid-forties who is neither alienated nor passive but suffers mightily and tears himself apart with the determination of a figure in Greek tragedy. Wade is an intelligent but damaged man, and he goes



A heritage of lovelessness: Nick Nolte is electric as a wounded son unable to escape his father's destructive temperament.

down in a fury. The movie represents nothing less than a modern attempt at tragedy by a director who has settled in the past for the merely fashionable or the unresonantly glum.

In the American cinema, violence breathes comfortably within the confines of genre movies: action films, crime pictures, thrillers. The conventions of such movies both release the formal beauty of violence and remove it from a world that might actually threaten us. When

violence is aestheticized, converted into style, we can enjoy it—even enjoy it ten or fifteen times a year. But violence unpropped by convention—that is, violence connected to pain—is something of a rarity, and it is always a risk, for it must rise to the level of art or fail altogether, as a graceless miscalculation.

Near the beginning of "Affliction," a visiting hunter dies in the snow, and, as Wade, the town's nominal law-enforcement officer, investigates the death, I caught myself wishing that the movie would turn into a detective story—that Wade would pursue the killer so that the movie could deliver the reassurance of genre satisfactions. As moviegoers, we instinctively shrink from a situation that has the sadness and intractability of life.

We've already seen that Wade can't talk to his little daughter, that she's frightened of him even when he means well, and that he's at odds with his ex-wife (Mary Beth Hurt), who has killed whatever love she once had for him and now refuses to cut him any slack. Do we need still more pain? Can't we escape? But there's no escape, only further exposure. We can see that Wade is both kindly and belligerent, that he misses the meaning of events, and reacts too much or too little, erupting over what he should laugh off, ridiculing what he should take seriously. Nick Nolte, as always, commits himself to what he's doing with a manly readiness that inspires affection, even awe. It's his largest, most adventurous performance: he pushes his serried voice a little harder than usual; he seems jacked up, then suddenly low, alternating between false cheer and morose negation. He yanks his

neck this way and that as if an electric charge were hitting his spine, and falls into strange trances, his entire past standing in the way of his next movement.

Wade has the neurotic aggressiveness and the odd breaches in understanding of troubled people we may know—friends and family members whom we love but cannot help. And unlike a character in a genre picture who operates, however violently, within the guardrails of convention, he's almost frighteningly free. Schra-

JOSEPH GOSFIELD

der, who adapted Banks's novel himself, brings us very close to Wade, pulling us into the fabric of his life—the jobs and favors, the quarrels and humiliations of a small town in which there's not enough economic activity to provide refuge for losers. Snow, it turns out, is the only commodity in this hapless place. The chief businessman is in the process of buying up land and extinguishing the legal status of the town so that it can become part of a ski resort. When Wade gets hold of this information, he mixes up the real-estate intrigues with his fantasies about the death of the hunter. He would like to play detective, but he jumps to conclusions and gets things wrong, perhaps because he needs to find plots and conspiracies everywhere as a way of explaining his own failure, which baffles him.

"Affliction" is bruising, even relentless, but it has a precision and clarity—a steadiness—that Schrader has never come near to before, and an unsentimental strain of sympathy, so that even its most discordant scenes are exhilarating, the way that a strong, biting wind is exhilarating. The movie turns into a detective story after all: Why is Wade so screwed up? Our sorrow is bound in fascination, and fascination of the good kind: a community of malice forms around Wade, as it often does around losers, but Schrader refuses to let us join it. Wade fights the snow, fights people's rejection of him and therefore only hastens it; and we see him, under the tutelage of his narrating brother, as both an actual floundering man and a character whose defeat has an exemplary, even heroic quality.

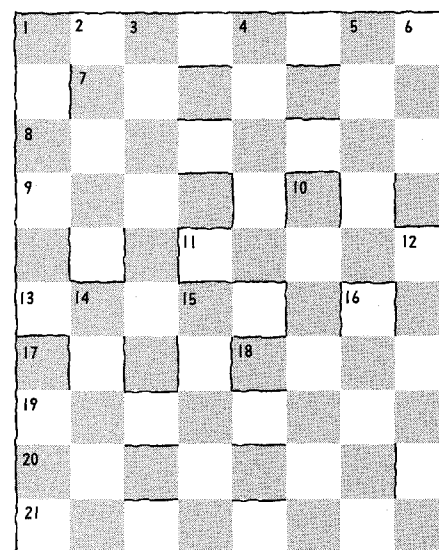
Wade's "affliction" is a heritage of lovelessness which manifests itself in rage. In the middle of the movie, he visits his parents, and his father, Glen, is a true nightmare—drunken, abusive, and irrational, a man more arbitrary than the Old Testament God who would annihilate his own creatures on a whim. James Coburn, playing him both in flashbacks and in the present, swivels his big body and displays menacing teeth; he is not enough of an actor to give much shading to the role, but the sheer grotesque vehemence of the performance from this genial old player is frightening. When they were boys, Glen provoked little Rolfe and Wade, punishing them if they stood up to him and ridiculing them if they didn't. He still razzes the love they try to express for him. No wonder Wade can't find the rhythm in his relationships and is always lunging

at people and then apologizing. Physically, Coburn and Nolte are alike—big, powerful men, with leathery voices and heavy hands—and they stagger and drink in the same way. They are father and son, and Wade is unable to escape the destructive element in the old man's temperament. Murder is in the air, and in this movie violence seems right—not morally but as the inevitable expression of the rage that fills men when they feel weak or lost. Rolfe's narration gives the tale a formal completeness and the curse of fatality. His brother Wade cannot transcend the father they both loathe; he can only follow him into violence and then into extinction.

A CIVIL ACTION" is yet another movie about the redemption of a lawyer. Swathed in double-breasted Italian suits, Jan Schlichtmann (John Travolta), a flashy Boston ambulance chaser, gets caught up, against his better judgment, in a fight against two large corporations that may have polluted the water and caused the deaths of small children in rural Massachusetts. Obsessed, Schlichtmann sacrifices everything to the case—destroying his firm, going into debt, giving up all other work. His effort is impressive, but perhaps only a society that has ruinously delivered itself into the arms of lawyers would make so large a fuss when a few members of the species behave with the dedication that would be taken as unremarkable in a schoolteacher, a fireman, or a nurse. The movie is not self-righteous, but there's a streak of obviousness in its moral melodrama which subdues one's interest. That the story is true (and is based on an expertly written book by Jonathan Harr) doesn't, I'm afraid, make "A Civil Action" any more satisfying dramatically. The writer-director Steven Zaillian has found clever ways of knitting complex expository material together, and he accurately captures the browned-out, forlorn look of the winter landscapes outside Boston. There's a witty performance by Robert Duvall as a seemingly preoccupied and eccentric but actually devastatingly effective litigator; unfortunately, the big confrontation between Duvall and Travolta that the entire movie appears to be working toward never arrives. The picture is well made but tame: I think one can safely state that a movie that reaches a climax with the hero writing a letter to the Environmental Protection Agency has landed in a certain amount of trouble. ♦

8x10 CRYPTIC

NO. 72 BY PATRICK BERRY



ACROSS

- 1 Irish figure with broken arm going into shock (8)
- 7 From behind, saw an item of furniture (7)
- 8 Really cooked his toast (2,4,2)
- 9 Greek bigwig in canal turned left (4)
- 11 Phantom member of Golden Horde (5)
- 13 Grave marker of sculpted steel (5)
- 18 Group of hunters want bird (4)
- 19 Ballroom dancing produced by Disney animation (8)
- 20 It's seen on the road, like parking brake (7)
- 21 Like the end of a pipe commercial in 3-D (8)

DOWN

- 1 Collars of small, medium, and large clothes beginning to expand (6)
- 2 Splashes water on dancing shoes (5)
- 3 Adjusts tetanus shot (7)
- 4 Charo's playing something from "The Metamorphosis" (5)
- 5 Inquires after cold kegs (5)
- 6 Said, "Forget it, understand?" (4)
- 10 Crazy old Whig is enthusiastic (3-4)
- 12 Petty dictator helps to make suffocating odor (3,3)
- 14 Some of the foolhardy refuse (5)
- 15 Move like a snake after shedding? It's limber (5)
- 16 Poet from long ago: A.D. ten, roughly (5)
- 17 TV show about police strike (4)

The solution to puzzle No. 71 appears on page 42. For a free copy of "The New Yorker's Guide to Solving Cryptic Crosswords," please send your fax number or a stamped, self-addressed envelope to "Solvers' Guide," The New Yorker, 20 West 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. For an electronic version, send an E-mail to puzzleguide@newyorker.com.

THE BACK PAGE

BY ROZ CHAST



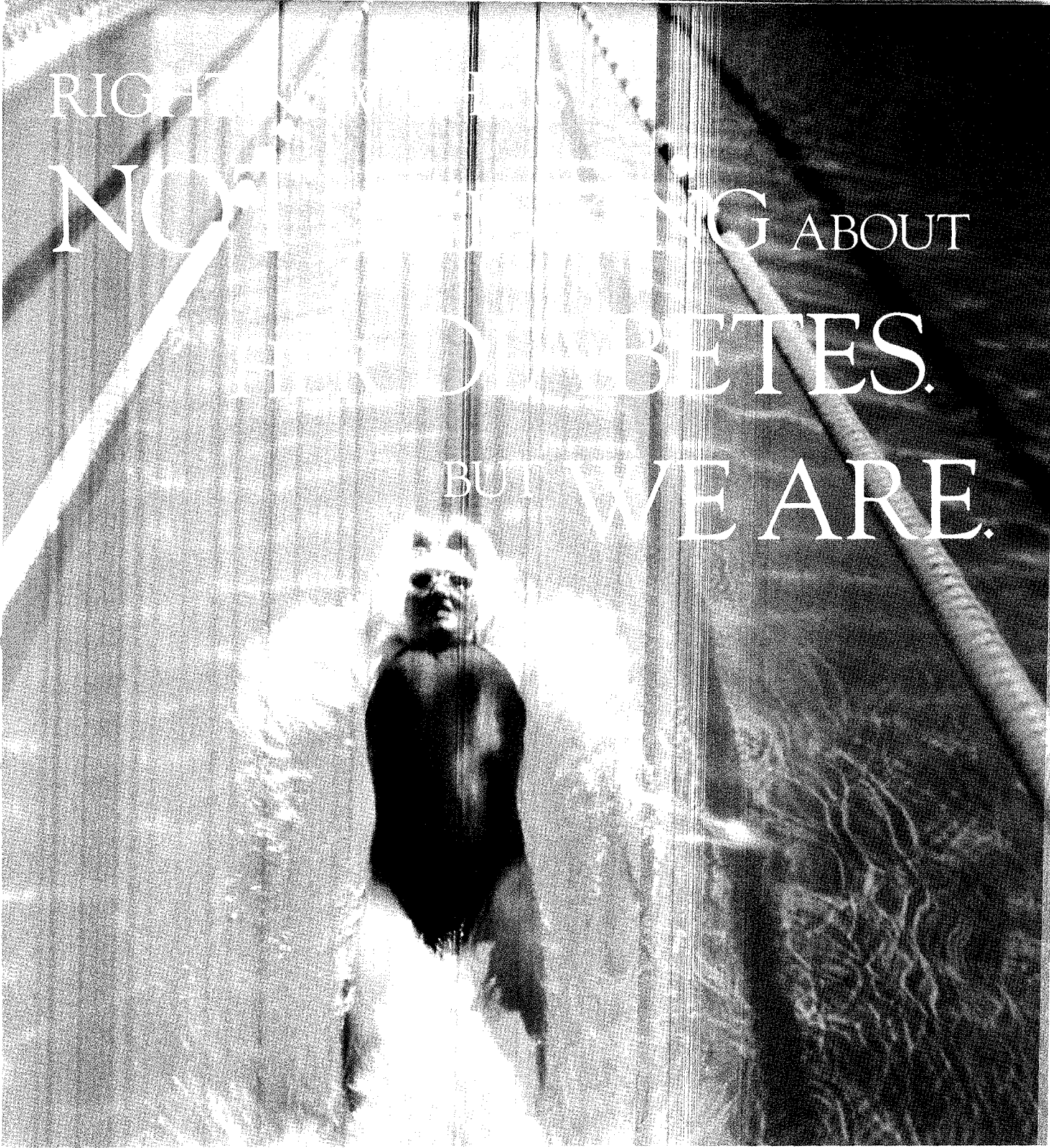
THE BIG BOOK OF PARENT-CHILD FIGHTS



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FINDING DIABETES.
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